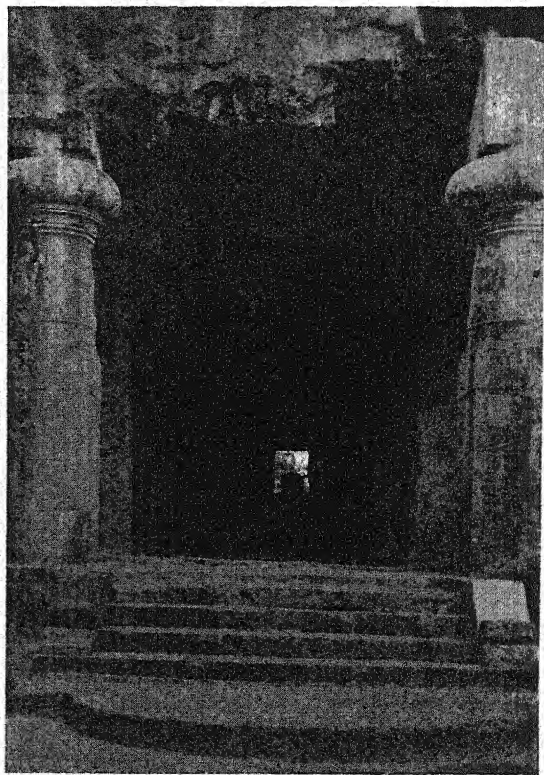


ROCK-CUT TEMPLES
AROUND BOMBAY



(514)



LINGA SANCTUARY

The avenue of imposing columns leads the eye straight to the altar of the Siva-Linga, the main object of worship in the central shrine silhouetted, sharply and effectively, against the brilliant light from the courtyard. There is nothing to distract the attention of the onlooker. The picture is complete. (cf. p. 99.)

~~A. 17.6~~
~~75~~

ROCK-CUT TEMPLES AROUND BOMBAY

AT

ELEPHANTA AND JOGESHWARI
MANDAPESHWAR AND KANHERI

BY

KANAIYALAL H. VAKIL, B. A., LL. B.

*Author of "At Ajanta," "Panoramic India," Art Critic
"The Bombay Chronicle" and Jt. Editor "The Roopa-Lekha."*

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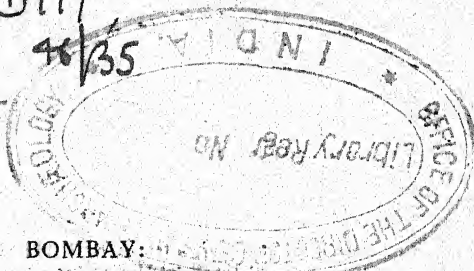
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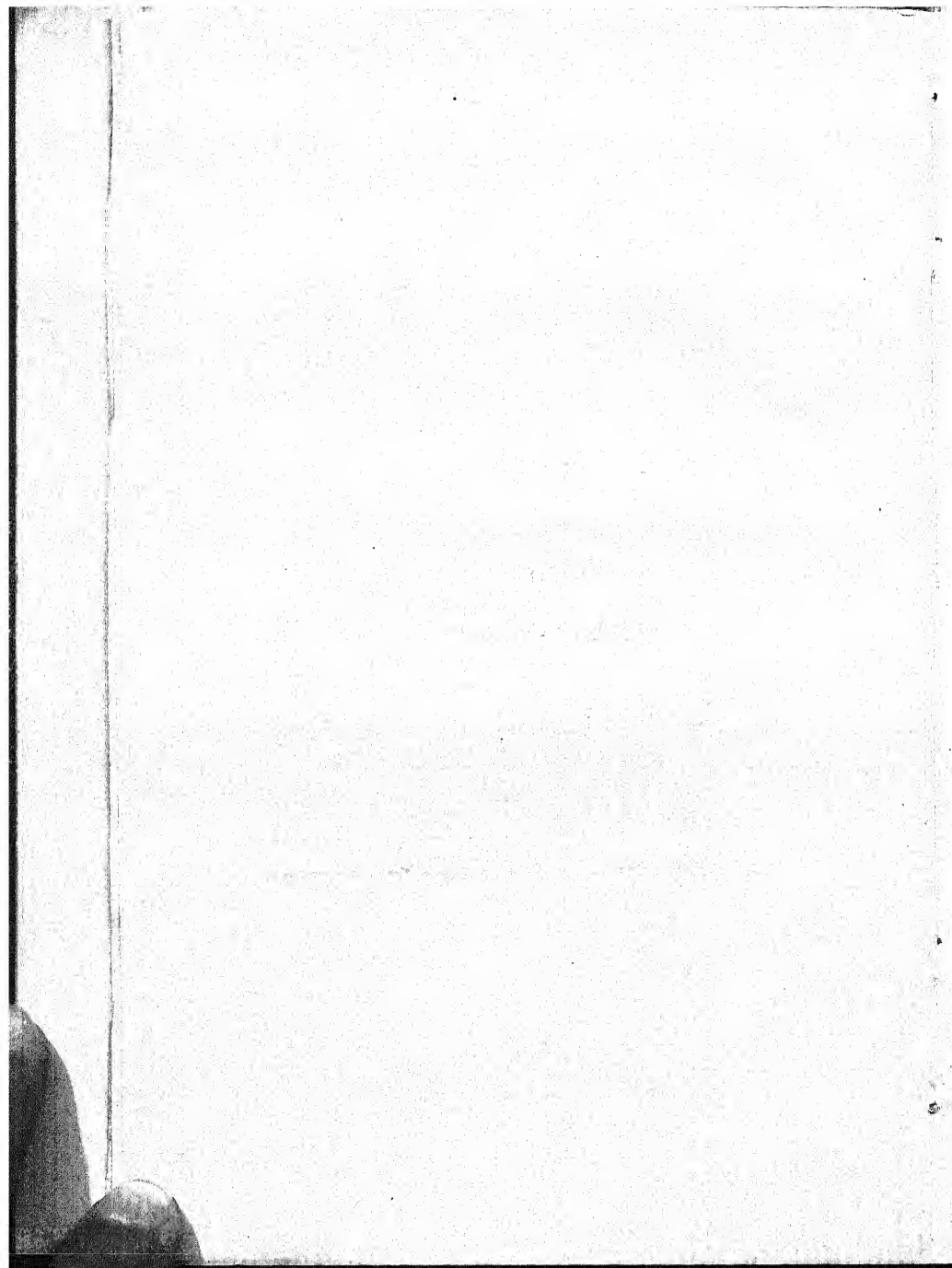
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PREFACE

This book, like my book "At Ajanta," is planned and written for a specific purpose. Its aim is to bring the world-renowned cave cathedrals at Elephanta and the cave-temples at Jogeshwari, Kanheri and Mandapeshwar of lesser renown, though not of lesser importance, than Elephanta, nearer the popular mind and imagination. Although they are, unlike the temples, say, at Ajanta, within a few miles and easy reach of Bombay, they have not been hitherto popularly appreciated or studied as they deserve to be even by fervent admirers, students and exponents of Indian art.

"At Ajanta," sketched, briefly, the achievements in painting sculpture and architecture inspired by Buddhism. Except the temples in the caves at Kanheri, the temples described in this book record the achievements in sculpture and architecture fostered by Brahamanism. Faint traces of painting found, for example, at Elephanta, Mandapeshwar or Kanheri are of little interest to the visitor. Similarly, unessential iconographic or archæological details would fail to enlist his sympathy or increase his attention. In fact, archæological speculations and iconographic tabulations that constitute the bulk of the current literary discussions and expositions of

Indian art have rendered the study and interpretation of painting, sculpture and architecture, practically, superficial and insignificant, if not superfluous. The necessity for a determined systematic effort to examine the art-monuments of India from the point of view distinctly, if not wholly, artistic has not been, as I pointed out in my book "At Ajanta," yet recognised. Some at least of the art-scholars in Europe have begun the systematic search for specific art-values of ancient Indian monuments. And, I was naturally delighted to find, not long after the publication of my book "At Ajanta," M. Ludwig Bachoffer's definite endeavour, in the study of "Early Indian Sculpture" to disown "the error of trying to interpret works of art only on the basis of expression." In spite of the "identity of intentions, the same motif was," M. Bachoffer rightly maintains, "represented in different ways." He does not merely think of "what" has been represented. He examines also "how" it is represented. The distinction has been, almost entirely, absent hitherto in the literature on Indian art. I have endeavoured to classify the relevant available information. But there are, naturally, aspects or points in the book which, no doubt, reveal in treatment preferences or conclusions that may be regarded as personal. The book is not, on the whole, meant to convey more than the essentials necessary for the specific aim that has prompted its publication.

It is not so much a contrast as a necessary supplement to the narrative of artistic achievements of Buddhist India outlined in the previous volume of this series. They may be, in fact, taken to serve as a basis for the comparative study of the manner in which two of the greatest religious movements of ancient India provided the impetus, direction and evolution of its art.

Some idea of the outlook that has prompted the book will be, I feel assured, obtained from the manner in which the book has been arranged and planned. The current emphasis on "what" is being represented is shifted to "how" it is being represented. So that, the story of the evolution of India's artistic heritage could be visualised, its significance could be analysed and elucidated and its enduring art values could be defined and applied. So that, the past becomes a living reality and inspiration in the present for the future of art more wide-ranged than its past. India's artistic achievements should be, as I suggested, visualised. For, India is, unfortunately, more written about than seen. And, it is because I aspire that his eyes should function, not less than his mind, that I have endeavoured to assist the visitor to the rock-cut temples with drawings and photographs not merely collected but taken, selected and arranged from points and angles of vision specifically directing his eyes to grasp the live graphic realities surviving in the temples—hitherto, however, not

seldom unsuspected and untraced. The difficulties of securing specific photographs of the cave temples mostly isolated from requisite facilities have been known to all seekers truly sensitive and responsive to the manifold message of Indian art. They have to linger, as I have had to linger, for hours, weeks, for the right time, sunshine and shadow, for the right point and angle, for the right moment of the registered impression that could enable them to share their vision and their joy with the vast human community in quest of imperishable beauty and unalloyed happiness. With increased facilities for photographs offered by my Publishers and greater confidence, I have been enabled to go a few paces further than I could when I began to take, select and arrange the drawings and photographs for my book "At Ajanta". Both the text and the illustrations are, of set purpose, planned to assist and guide the eyes not less than the mind. Consequently, almost all the photographs in this book are published for the first time. Fergusson, speaking about the interesting peculiarities of the "Dharamsala" cave at Kanheri, observes, significantly, that other caves of the class may be found "when they are looked for." How few, very few, of the loud-toned, sentimental and pedantic exponents of Indian art have begun or rather learnt to look at the artistic achievements of India!

How many still retain, to use Mr. Barman's apt

phrase, "that favourite mid-Victorian trick of lecturing the past on all possible occasions!"

I am indebted to Syts. Kalianji Curumsey Damji, N. J. Nalvala and the late Mr. Gundevia of Messrs. Felicia & Co. for photographs specially taken for publication in this book.

I am also thankful to Mr. S. B. Umrigar for the drawings of the plans of the rock-cut temples.

K. H. V.

"Villa Vasant,"

SANTA CRUZ.



Some of the Books Consulted

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|--|--|
| "The Cave Temples of India" ... | Burgess and Fergusson. |
| "The Rock-Cut Temples of Elephanta or Gahrapuri" | J. Burgess. |
| "The Rock-Cut Temples of India" ... | J. Fergusson. |
| "Handbook of Architecture" ... | J. Fergusson. |
| "Indian and Eastern Architecture" ... | J. Fergusson. |
| "The Ancient Monuments, Temples And Sculptures of India" ... | J. Burgess. |
| "Architecture" | Christian Barman. |
| "Poetry of Architecture" | Frank Rutter. |
| "Meaning of Architecture" ... | I. K. Pond. |
| "A History of Fine Art In India and Ceylon" | Vincent Smith. |
| "The Significance of the Fine Arts" | Committee, American Institute of Architects. |
| "Indian Architecture" | E. B. Havell. |
| "Zenith of Indian Art" | E. B. Havell. |
| "Dravidian Architecture" ... | S. K. Aiyangar. |
| "Chalukyan Architecture" ... | Henry Cousens. |
| "Life in India" | Mrs. Spiers. |
| Indian Archaeological Survey Reports | Cunningham. |
| Translations Sanskrit Poems... .. | R. T. H. Griffiths. |
| "Ancient India" | K. de B. Codrington. |
| "An Introduction to the Study of Mediaeval Indian Sculpture" ... | K. de B. Codrington. |
| "La Sculpture Hindoue" | Wm. Cohn. |
| "Monuments de L'Hindusthan" ... | Langles. |
| "Indian Sculpture of the Gupta Period" | Vincent Smith. |
| "Renaissance Architecture in Spain" | Prentice. |
| "The Architecture of Humanism" | Scott. |
| "Elements of Hindu Iconography" | T. A. Gopinath Rao. |



CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	vii
Some of the Books Consulted	xiii
List of Illustrations	xix

PART I

GENERAL INFORMATION

(i) Elephanta—Ancient Site—Age of the Temples— Present Name—Entrance and Height	3
(ii) Jogeshwari—Age of the Cave—The Largest Temple—The Approach—The New Finds ...	5
(iii) Mandapeshwar—Age of the Cave—Converted As a Church—Its Location	8
(iv) Kanheri—Most Extensive Caves—Important Centre— Age of the Caves—Most Modern of Buddhist Caves—Plaster and Painting—Masonry Terraces— The Relics	10
(v) The Most Important Caves	14
(vi) Classified Buddhist Caves	15
(vii) The Cave Numbers—Kanheri	16
(viii) The Translated Poems	16

PART II

AT ELEPHANTA

SCULPTURE (i):—The Ancient Cities—The “Isle of Gold”—The Mental Approach—The Bright Interior—Elemental Power and Virility ...	19
---	----

(1) Dance Outspreading Space—The Eventide Dance—Siva Symbols and Attributes—Common Features in Composition—Unity, Not Uniformity—Ellora And Elephanta—(2) Bhairava—Mahakal Dance—Poets and Playwrights—Controlled Fury—A Puzzle Game—(3) Marriage of Siva and Parvati—The Bride—Parvati—Siva As A Bridegroom—The Meeting, The Lover And The Maid—(4) The Descent of the Ganges, “Gangavatarana”—The Beauty of Indian Costumes and Ornaments—(5) The Trimurti—Creative Thought—(6) “Ardhanarishwar”, Sex Compliments—(7) Siva And Parvati In Kailas—(8) Ravanna Under Kailas—(9) Siva, Mahayogi, Dharmaraja, The Intellectual Ascetic—The Linga Shrine—Dwarapalas—Academic “Style” Gandharvas And Apsaras... ..	27
The East Wing	62
The West Wing	63
The Second Rock-Cut Temple	63
The Third Rock-Cut Temple... ..	64
The Fourth Rock-Cut Temple	64

STUDY OF INDIAN SCULPTURE

Indian Sculpture	65
Importance Of Elephanta Sculptures—Obscured By Stock Terms of Criticism	66
Variety of the Sculptures... ..	68
The Themes of the Sculptures	68
The Place of the Sculptures	69
Indian Sculptures—And Asiatic Or “Oriental” Sculptures—The Mind of Man—The Human	

	Page
Body—Sense of Movement—Not Linear—Material—Silhouette and Modelling—Drapery and Ornaments—Local Art Achievements	70
ARCHITECTURE (ii):—Architecture In Parts—Antiquarian Speculation—“Silversmith’s Style”—“Derived” Origins—The Complete Picture—Functional Architecture—Social Continuity In Architecture—Temple Plans	79

PART III

AT JOGESHWARI

SCULPTURE (i):—The Graphic Realities—“Dull and Undignified”—Sculptures Change Position—Ravana Under Kailas—The Tandava Dance—Marriage of Siva and Parvati—Restive Nandi—The Dwarpalas—Sculptured Doorways—Courts—Important Image on Verandah... ..	97
ARCHITECTURE (ii):—Uncopied Architecture—Doors In Artistic Scheme—Substituted for Colonnades—Architecture Misconceived—Rituals, Daily needs. Architectural Logic of Plan—Domestic Architecture—Water Drainage—Distinction of Columns... ..	109

PART IV

AT MANDAPESHWAR

SCULPTURE (i):—Mahayogi—The Tandava Dance—Converted Church—Screening Wall—Rare Sculptures—Inner Room Panel—The Tandava Dance.	123
---	-----

	Page
ARCHITECTURE (ii):—Unadorned Hall—"House of Gods"—Columns—Plan	129

PART V

AT KANHERI

SCULPTURE (i):—"Crude Style of Art"—Karla and Kanheri—The Costume and Ornaments of the Sculptured Figures—The Court—The Columns—Uncommon Sculpture—Buddhist Litanny—Buddhist Pose	135
ARCHITECTURE (ii):—Great Chaitya—An Architectural Copy—New Light—Buddhist Architecture—"Durbar Cave," Not A Vihar—Dharamshala—Decorated Festival Canopies . . .	145

CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary Social Aspirations—Artistic Skill—The Human Touch—Passionate Form—And, Epic Contents—Ancient Imagination, Poems, Plays And Folklore—Unexplored Artistic Territory—Western India—The Meeting Ground—Evolution of Distinct Forms, Architectural and Sculptural—"The Policeman of History"—Unfettered Sight—To See as the Artists Saw It—From the Point of View of Art—The Present for the Future—Permanent Heritage of Beauty	150
--	-----

APPENDIX

PAREL SCULPTURES:—"Vidyeshwaras"—The Link—Unexplored Avenues of Indian Art . . .	157
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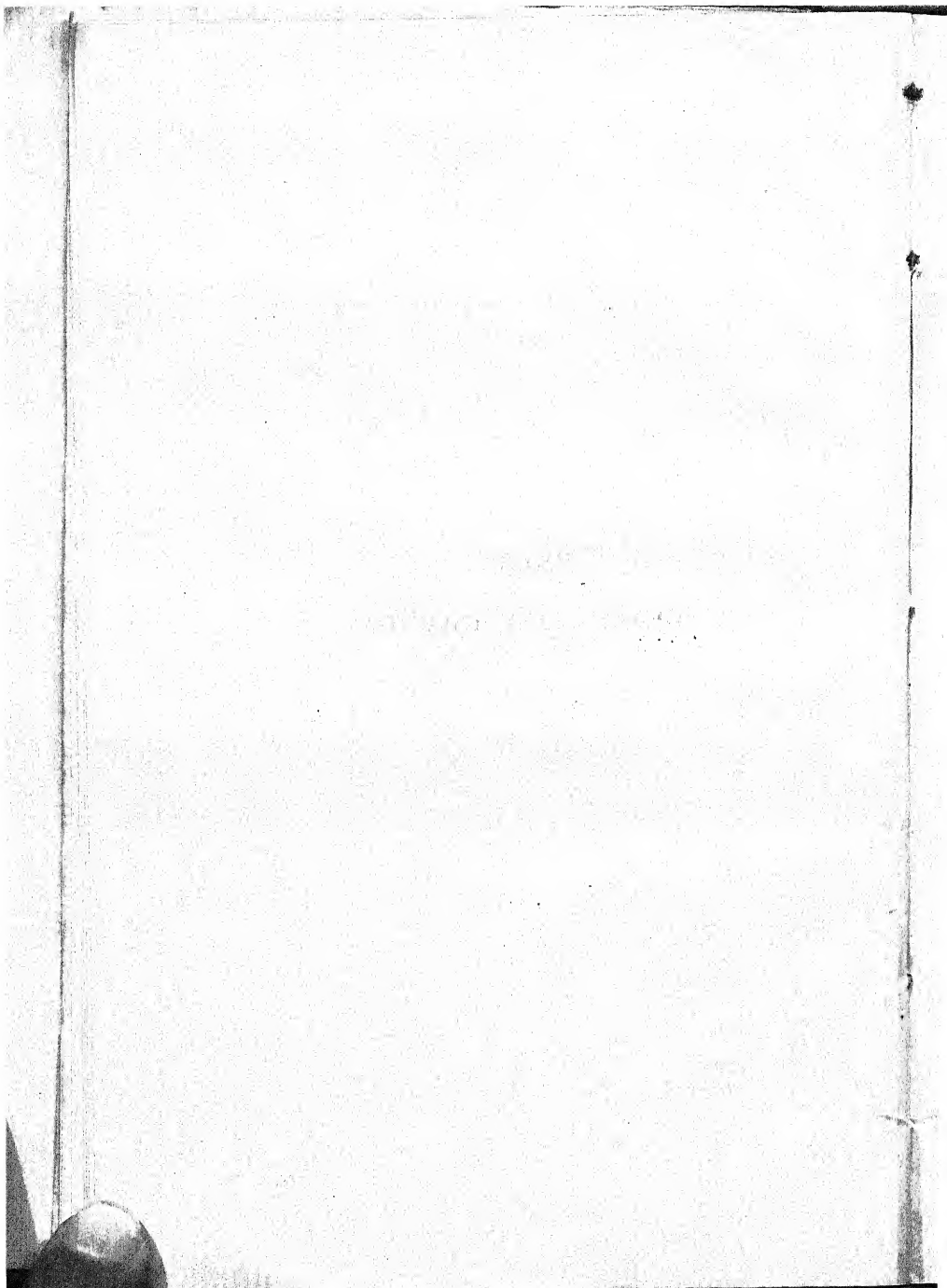
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Elephanta 1. Linga Sanctuary Frontispiece	
AT ELEPHANTA	
2. Tandava	23
3. Courtyard-Lions	24
4. Main Temple from the Courtyard ...	25
5. Tandava	26
6. „	27
7. Kal Bhairava	34
8. „	35
9. Marriage of Siva-Parvati	40
10. Gangavataran	41
11. Trimurti	48
12. Ardhanarishwar	49
13. Siva-Parvati in Kailas	52
14. Ravanna Under Kailas	53
15. Shiva Mahayogi	54
16. Dwarpalas (Linga Shrine)	55
17. „ (Trimurti)	60
18. „ („)	61
19. East Wing Lions	62
20. Siva Dance (Bhairav)	63
21. Ganesha	64
22. Dravidian Brackets (2nd Rock Temple) ...	65
23. Fourth Rock Temple	66
24. Horse-Shoe Door Lintel (3rd Rock Temple)	67
25. Colonnade around the main Shrine ...	88
26. Main Temple Plan	89
AT JOGESHWARI	
27. Central Sanctuary	98
28. Ravanna Under Kailas	99
29. Tandava	102
30. Marriage of Siva	103

	Page
31. Marriage of Siva, Right Section	104
32. „ „ „ Left „	105
33. Dwarpala	106
34. Carved Door	107
35. „ Window	108
36. Unrecognised Torso	109
37. Plan of Jogeshwari	116
38. Verandah, Bench and Window	117
39. Colonnade	118
AT MANDAPESHWAR	
40. Newly Built Wall and Reservoir	122
41. Cross Niche, Verandah	123
42. Chapel, Inner	124
43. „ „ Section	125
44. „ „ Detail	126
45. Tandava, Full	127
46. „ Right Section	128
47. „ Left „	129
48. Plan of Mandapeshwar	130
49. Side Chamber—Main Hall	131
50. Verandah Panel and Column Motif	132
51. Shrine and Pulpit	133
52. Colonnade, Hall	134
AT KANHERI	
53. Royal Groups	135
54. Verandah (Danniel's Drawing)	138
55. Court and Verandah Durbar Hall	139
56. Padmapani Figures	140
57. Great Chaitya Cave Plan	141
58. Durbar Hall Plan	156
APPENDIX	
59. Vidyeshwaras	157

PART I

GENERAL INFORMATION



Elephanta (i)

Ancient Site

The cave temples at Elephanta, or at "Gharapuri," or "Girpuri" (City-on-the-Hill) are on an island situated at a distance of about six miles from Bombay. It has been conjectured that the temples are on the site of an ancient town hitherto undiscovered.

Age of the Temples

The temples were excavated in the rocks over a thousand years ago. It has been found difficult to assign it an exact date. But the one generally assigned to them is 750 A. D. Fergusson, who initiated the systematic study of Indian architecture, gives them from the point of view of architectural evolution, a later date. He would not place them earlier than the 10th Century A. D. Dr. Wilson "on mythological grounds" is "disposed to limit the age of the Brahmanical excavated temples to the eighth or ninth century after Christ. J. Burgess, more or less, agrees with him. He supports his opinion with the inference from the inscription found at the temples with character of a period earlier than the 10th century A. D. His second reason for the support of his conclusion is that the sculptured panels in the temples resemble the pictures of the Siva episodes

narrated in Kalidas' "Kumarsambhava" of the 6th century. Finally, he says that the architectural details of the subsequent remains do not tally with those found in these temples. To these three reasons given by Burgess could be added three more in support of the earlier date of the temples. The first is the discovery of the seal with the engraved characters (Narayana) of the 5th or 6th century. Secondly, the Babylon reference of the 2nd century (Ardhanarishwara). Lastly, the fact that Brahama is carved without the book of the vedas which appears in later carvings.

Present Name

The caves at Elephanta were first so called by the Portuguese on account of the elephants carved in stone which formerly decorated the landing place, or may be, the entrance of the caves. The elephant from the temples may be seen in the compound of the Victoria Gardens by the side of the Victoria and Albert Museum, at Byculla, Bombay.

Entrance and Height

The temples are nearly 250 feet high from sea-level. The main entrance of the central shrine is towards the North. The old landing-place is at the South of the island. A daily ferry service conveys the visitor to and from the caves.

Jogeshwari (ii)

The cave temples at Jogeshwari are situated at a distance which could be covered by a few minutes walk on the east of the station of that name on the B. B. & C. I. Railway.

The Age of the Cave

The "Dumar Lena" cave temple at Ellora is believed to have been excavated in the beginning, the main temple at Elephanta is believed to mark the middle and the cave temples at Jogeshwari the end of the 8th century A. D.

The Largest Temple

Of the three, more or less, contemporary temples of Siva worship, at Ellora, Elephanta and Jogeshwari, the temple at Jogeshwari is, decidedly, the largest in plan and scale.

The Approach

The direction of the road from the railway station leads to the present approach on the west. Mr. Burgess thought that the court on the south side of the temple was "doubtless intended as the front." Probably, the general conditions in the cave at the time when Burgess examined the cave nearly half a century ago precluded him from observing carefully the vestibule, if one may so describe it, and the

court on the east side. Otherwise, he would not have been so emphatic. In all probability, it is the vestibule and courts on the east that served, as in Elephanta, as the original entrance to the cave-temple. Burgess describes the eastern approach. He says:—"The approach from the east is by a descending passage and a flight of steps from 10 to 12 feet wide, landing in a small court in front of a neat doorway with fluted pilasters having *sardula* brackets and a bas-relief under an arch over the lintel. This is the entrance to a covered porch about 36 feet long by 45 feet in width with four pillars on each side, separating it from two compartments, the walls of which have been covered with sculptures. A similar doorway leads from this first porch into a court about 42 feet by 66. On the opposite side of this court are three entrances into a second porch 60 feet wide and 28 deep, with two rows of four columns each across it, from front to back, and from this again three other doors, one in each bay, lead into the great cave, the central door having sculptures on each side of it. The whole distance from the eastern entrance porch to that on the west, including the courts mentioned above, but excluding the passages, is thus about 250 feet in a straight line, which exceeds that of any other Brahmanical cave known, except of course the Kailas." It is surprising that despite the elaborate scheme of vestibules, corridor and courts and sculptures ex-

cavated on the eastern side, which he had himself noticed, Burgess should have so emphatically asserted the south court to be "doubtless intended as the front."

The New Finds

The principal finds, besides small fragments of sculptures, recovered by the Archaeological Department nearly five years ago, while removing the accumulated debris from the cave were:—“(1) a small hollow elephant of copper with a long chain attached to it which must have been used as a receptacle for pouring water over the god, for instance a Siva *linga*, (2) four small bells of bellmetal, two with and two without handles and (3) two round relic-boxes of stone having close-fitting lids of the same material.”

¹ Archaeological Survey Annual Report, 1925-26.

Mandapeshwar (iii)

The cave temple at Mandapeshwar is situated at a distance of a few minutes' walk, towards the west, from the railway station of Mount Poisar on the B. B. & C. I. Railway. The railway journey from the city of Bombay to Mount Poisar takes nearly an hour.

Age of the Cave

The cave temple is judged to have been excavated during the later half of the eighth century A. D. and believed to be almost contemporary with Jogeshwari.

Converted as a Church

The cave was converted into a Roman Catholic Church forming part of the scheme for monastic establishment organised by P. Antonio de Porto in the 16th century. The revenues of the Siva temples that were till then able to maintain, it is said, nearly fifty *yogis* were transferred to the Church and, an extensive monastery was, in fact, built as an adjunct to the Church. The Church was dedicated to "Notre Dame de la Misericorde."

Its Location

The temple confronts the east. It has been excavated, like Jogeshwari, out of a low rock. But its formation is unlike the formation of the rock at

Jogeshwari. The camel-back curve and incline of the rock at Jogeshwari is missed here. Its wide layout confronts an open plain. It was called by the Portuguese Montpezir. Its current popular name is Mount Poisur, the name which the railway station has adopted. The remains of a big monastic building, part of the converted church, could be seen on the top of the temple.

Kanheri (iv)

The rock-cut temples of Kanheri are situated at a distance of about 6 miles from Thana, on the G. I. P. Railway and about 5 miles from Borivli on the B. B. & C. I. Railway. The rock in which the temples have been excavated has been marked out by its bare summit. The hills in its neighbourhood are mostly covered with thick foliage. The highest point of the rock is nearly 1,500 feet above sea-level.

Most Extensive Series

The caves at Kanheri are, perhaps, the most extensive series of rock-cut temples. They are nearly 109 in number. Most of them are, however, small and uninteresting to the visitor.

Important Centre

The large number of the caves, mostly monastic, was, probably, the requisite necessity for the residence of the innumerable visitors, pilgrims and monks who, naturally, passed through the numerous ancient towns which surrounded the caves. Suparaka, the capital of Konkan, Kalyan, a prosperous port, Chemula, on the island of Trombay, Vasya, conjectured to be Bassein, Sri Staanaka, that is, Thana and Ghodbunder have been, by their importance, frequently mentioned and recorded in history.

Age of the Caves

The number of the caves, their uneven grouping and character indicate the varying dates of the excavations. There have been, however, numerous inscriptions discovered in the caves which supplement the conclusion about their dates derived from architectural and sculptural data. The simple cells of the monks may be from before the Christian era, the caves with narrow porch or with benches running alongside the walls would perhaps be assigned the period between the second to the fourth century. The caves which contain sculptures of the "Mahayana" period reach the middle of the ninth century. Fergusson divides the series as follows:—First, those in the ravine, in the fourth or fifth century, those opposite the "Durbar" cave with those on each side of the great cave probably at least a century later; then the great cave and lastly the unfinished one, the first one meets on the usual route, with the pillars on the exterior similar to those at Elephanta.

"Most Modern" of Buddhist Caves

Fergusson considers the Kanheri group of caves as "one of the most modern of the Buddhist series in India." He is inclined to think that "the greater part of them at least were executed by a colony of Buddhists, who may have taken refuge here after being expelled from the continent, and who have

tried to reproduce the lost Karli in their insular retreat."

Plaster and Painting

He points out that "some remains of plaster and painting exist in almost all these caves, though from the porous nature of the stone through which the water must percolate during the rains, the vestiges are small, and I cannot find one complete figure in any; owing to this cause no vestige of either exists on the roofs, but only on the walls in the less exposed situations."

Masonry Terraces

"A good deal of masonry exists," he says, "on the hill as the supporting walls of terraces, which have been formed in front of all the different series of caves, and no doubt were formerly planted with gardens, as those at Gwalior now are; and they probably existed at the other series, but have now been destroyed. The view from the upper series of terraces is very fine and interesting. On the slope above the cornice of some of these caves mortices are cut in the rock, and are evidently footings for wooden posts which may have been used to support a decoration of some sort, but probably an awning or screen to shelter the front of the cave from the sun."

The Relics

In 1839 Dr. James Bird found in the largest of the stupa in front of the great *chaitya* cave "a circular stone, hollow in the centre, and covered at the top by a piece of gypsum. This contained two small copper urns, in one of which were some ashes mixed with a ruby, a pearl, small pieces of gold, and a small gold box, containing a piece of cloth; in the other a silver box and some ashes were found. Two copper plates containing legible inscriptions, in the *lat* or cave character, accompanied the urns, and these so far as I have been able to decipher them, inform us that the persons buried here were of Buddhist faith. The smaller copper plates bear an inscription in two lines, the last part of which contains the Buddhist creed."

The Most Important Cave Temples (v)

Those interested, generally, in Indian art, those who cannot spare the time requisite for a close survey of all the cave temples described in this book, would find the cave temples at Elephanta and Jogeshwari more than sufficiently representative of some of the best work of the period. They are within easy reach of the city of Bombay and the routes are less tiresome than the routes, for example which lead to Mandapeshwar or Kanheri. To the visitor particularly interested in cave temples of the Buddhist faith, a visit to the caves at Kanheri is, of course, a necessity. But if he can go to Karla or Ajanta, he will miss little if he misses Kanheri. For, as Fergusson points out, the Buddhists appear to have merely "reproduced" in Kanheri "the lost Karli." Besides, the route to the caves is arduous and the journey and even a hurried inspection of the extensive caves would demand at least one whole day.

Buddhist Caves (vi)

The visitor to the Buddhist cave temples will, of course, notice that they have been classified broadly as *Chaitya* and *Vihar*. The *Chaitya* caves are those with the *stupa*, the central domed shrine, containing or supposed to contain the relics of *Bhagwan* Buddha. The *Vihar* caves may be described as monasteries. The *Chaityas* were meant for common worship only. The *Vihars* were used for residence as well.

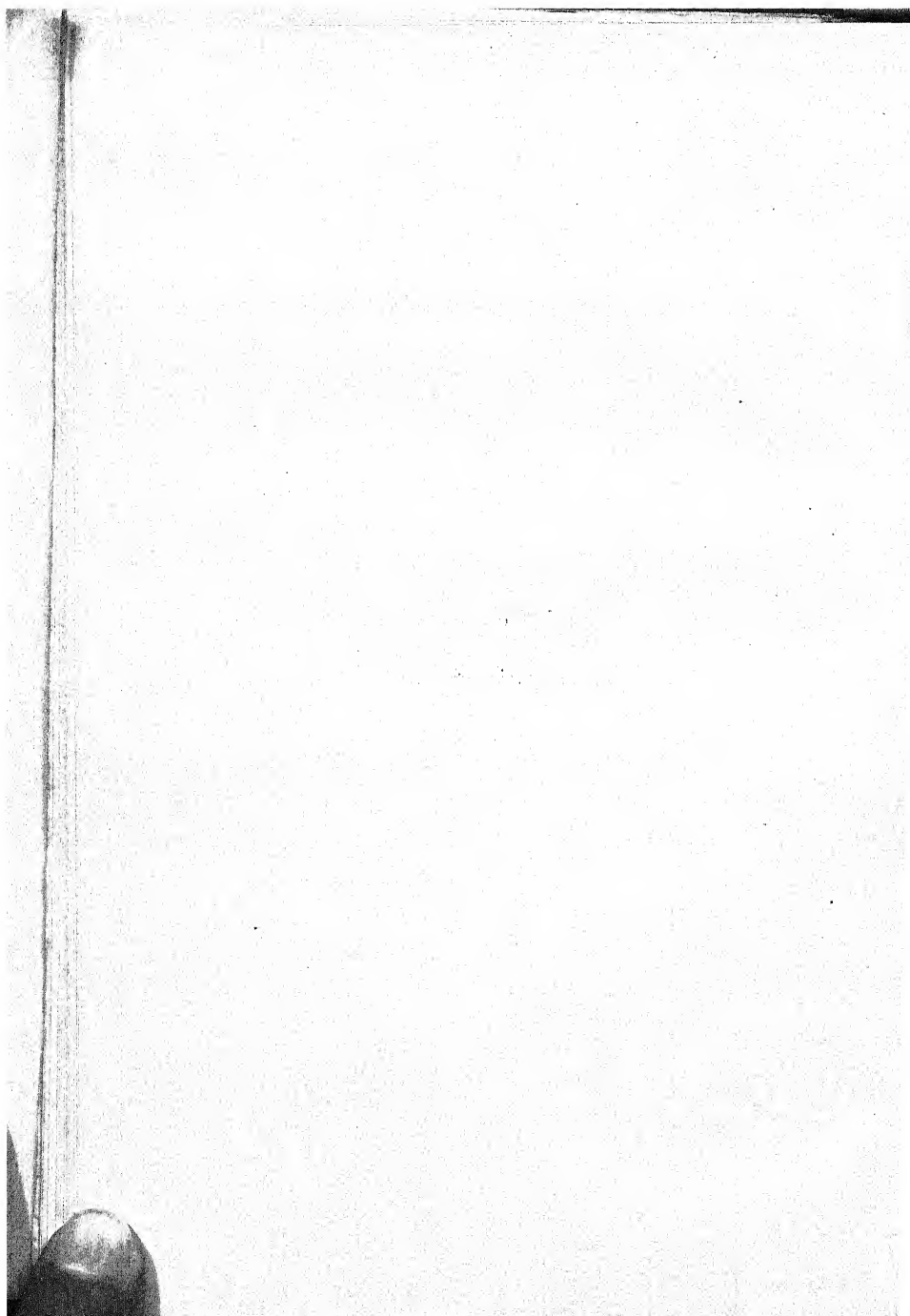
The Cave Numbers (vii)

For the cave numbers at Kanheri, I have relied on and adopted those given by Burgess and Fergusson in their book on the "Cave Temples Of India." Their, comparatively, precise observation and perceptions, if not entirely their conclusions, have tempted me to keep close and restricted to their description. For, preconceived theories, mostly antiquarian, sentimental and not infrequently irrelevant, still wear the descriptive disguise for the "revived" literary masquerade of Indian art adopted by subsequent writers.

The Translated Poems (viii)

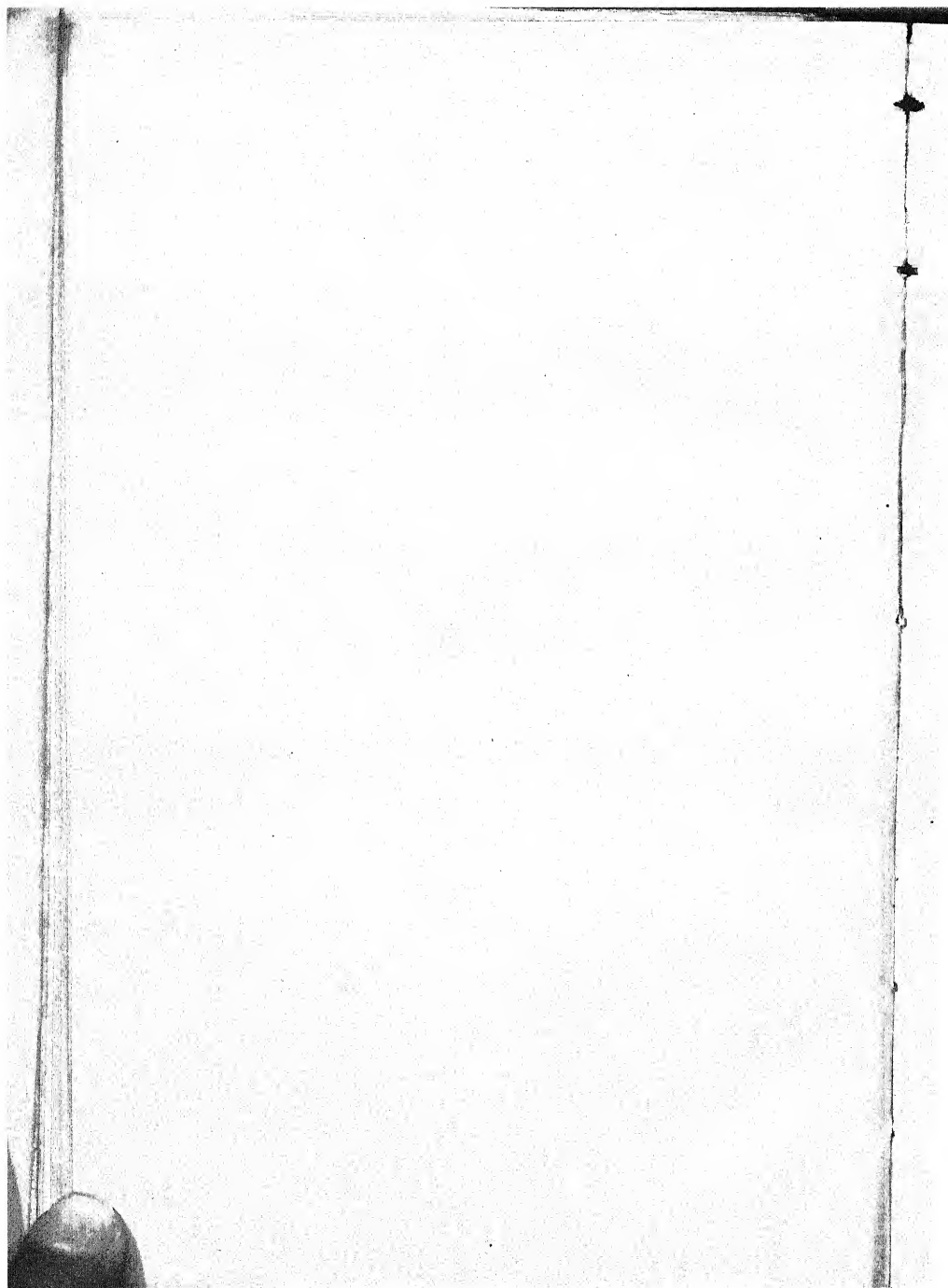
The poems in Sanskrit, Part II, are those cited by Burgess from Wilson's "Hindu Theatre" and Troyer's "Raja-Tarangini."

PART II
AT ELEPHANTA



(i)

SCULPTURE



"Had it not been for the ingenuity of human madness, the caves at Elephanta would at this hour have been not only a valuable key to many inexplicable appearances in other caves but a noble monument of ancient Indian Architecture and Sculpture."

—Hector MacNeil—1783.

"Epanoui dans la vie, le fleuve de vie, l'air, le soleil, le sentiment de l'être est un débordement. C'est ainsi que nous apparaît l'art de l'extrême Orient Le divin du corps humain a été obtenu à cette époque, non parce qu'on était plus près des origines car nos formes sont demeurées toutes pareilles; mais la servitude de maintenant a cru s'émanciper en tout; et nous sommes desorbiter. Le goût manque—Quel talent dans l'orgueil du corps.

—Auguste Rodin.

The rock-cut edict of Asoka, one of the greatest of emperors of ancient India, more than two thousand years ago, pointedly observed that "for long kings started out on pleasure tours." But Asoka "beloved of the Gods," started the vogue for tours of a different kind and aim. He inaugurated for his officials, for rulers, kings and emperors the "tours of piety."

The Visitor who starts on the pleasure tour for Bombay will find the city's natural setting and surroundings of rare charm. The vast expanse of the sea open to the curved bay of the island city, and the river creeks and lakes which reflect the glorious heights of the ghats which form the skyline over the varied and

dense foliage of its sea-faced suburbs, are a delight he cannot over-appreciate.

The Ancient Cities

If, however, he is on some evening captured by the pensive mood and, like Asoka, impelled toward "tours of piety," he will find himself close to the ancient city of Soparak or Sopara which more than two thousand years ago was hailed as the "Queen" of the cities on the western coast of India, a city which for centuries maintained its international importance and contacts both commercial and cultural. Of the ancient city of Soparak, thirty miles north of Bombay, its magnificent buildings and towers and gates there is no trace. But the cave temples of Jogeshwari, Mandapeshwar and Kanheri in the neighbourhood, in Salsette, in the north and at Elephanta, across the harbour of Bombay, are to this day richly suggestive of the peaks in art reached by the spiritual and cultural impulses of the civilisation once preserved and proclaimed by the "Queen of the Cities."

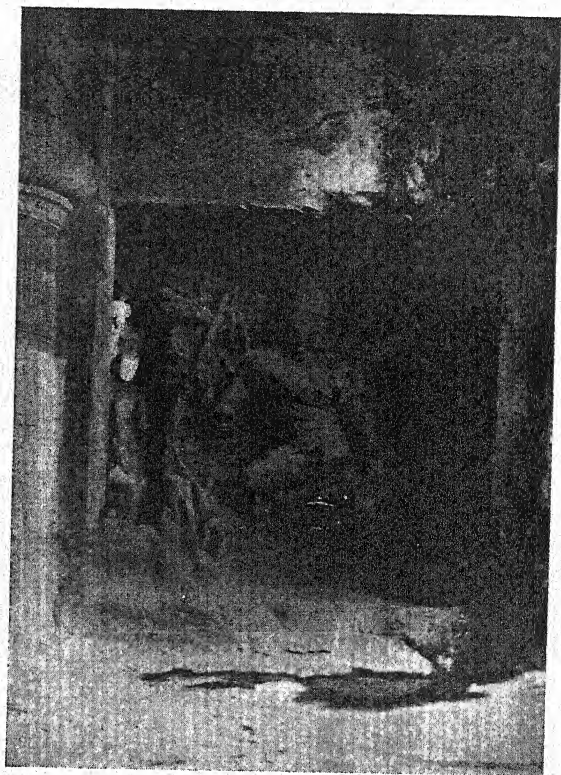
"The Isle of Gold"

At Elephanta the visitor is offered the uncommon chance to observe the picturesque surroundings crowned by the caves. From the porch or verandah of the main shrine could be seen the cool, fresh,



No. 2.

At Elephanta



"TANDAVA"

The sculptor's art has, here, scored its inherent, decisive and ultimate victory.

blue and green, sky and foliage, which, along with the white sails of fishing boats sprinkled like so many delightful toys over its rippling surface, colour and decorate the gentle ebb and tide of the beautiful bay which gives its beauty and name to the modern city on the opposite end.

De Couto in his book on "Da Asia" recalls the ancient anecdotes associated with the island of Elephanta. He says that Uka, Okha, Usha, daughter of Banasura who dedicated herself to perpetual virginity lived in the island for many years and that "the ancient say in the time of King Banasura gold rained at Elephanta for three hours, and it was therefore called Santupori (Shonitpura) that is to say, in their language the isle of gold." The brick foundations, remains of old fortifications, numerous cisterns and tanks seen around the present surviving excavated temples are evidence of the ancient city of "The Isle of Gold." The non-Indian literary references to Elephanta begin as early as 1579. The temples have thus continued to attract outside interest and curiosity for over three hundred years.

The Mental Approach

The close relation between architecture and sculpture in ancient India has been often noticed and mentioned. But it has seldom been, definitely, examined. The mental approach and attitude towards the ancient temples remain therefore blurred and

incoherent. Archaeological and iconographic details are collected with diligence, not interpreted with vision. Sculptures are assigned their dates, sometimes their "schools," seldom their qualities, but never their place.

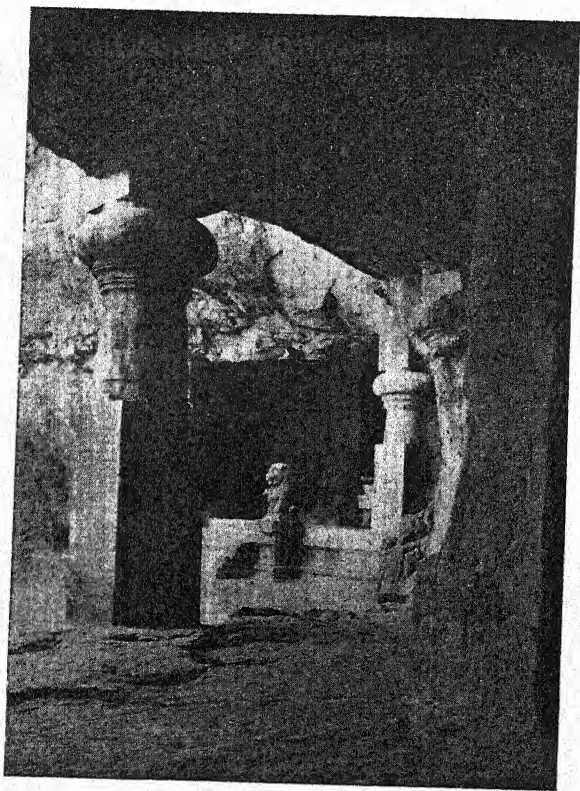
Let us, therefore, first think of their place. Two out of the three entrances of the main shrine at Elephanta are obstructed by debris. Consequently, we can visualise the original layout of the temple only imperfectly. But the three entrances, their open courtyards, recessed verandahs and overhanging eaves are, obviously, derived from ancient Indian architectural traditions and designs. These almost invariably prepare, with the dominant features which minimise the violent light and heat of the tropical sun with numerous recesses and vast shadows, first the eye and afterwards the mind of the spectator, pilgrim or devotee.

The Bright Interior

As he enters the hall of the temple he will, probably, find it gloomy. But the present gloom is the achievement of time, not the result of the original fashioning of the interior. Those who fashioned the Siva temple, certainly, aimed at sober austerity for the great hall. But it was not meant to be gloomy. The entire body inside, the columns, the statues and everything else was, says De Couto, "formerly carved with a thin coating of lime mixed with a sort of

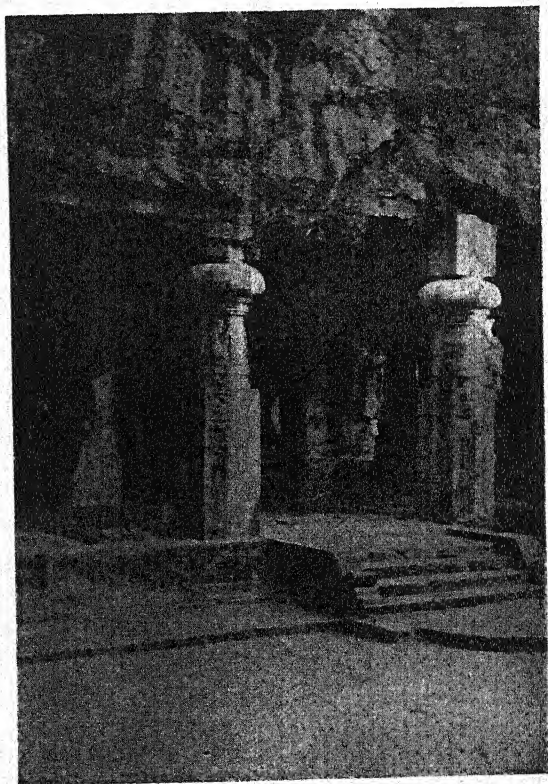
No. 3.

At Elephanta



"NANDI" COURTYARD FROM THE MAIN TEMPLE

The deeply recessed verandahs and overhanging eaves with their vast and cool shadows minimise the violent light and heat of the tropical sun.



MAIN TEMPLE FROM THE "NANDI" COURTYARD

Those who fashioned the Siva temple, certainly aimed at sober austerity. The entire body inside, the columns, the statues and everything else was decorated with paintings which made the temple "so bright that it was a beautiful object and well worth seeing."

bitumen and other preparations which made the temple altogether so bright that it was a beautiful object and well worth seeing; and not only did make the figures look pretty, but enabled one to perceive very distinctly the features of the countenance and the delicacy of workmanship; so that neither in silver nor in wax could they be made or engraven with more nicety nor with more elegance and perfection." The ceiling of the west portico of the main temple and the sunk frieze inside the chapel at the side of its east wing bear faint traces of colour and chequered patterns.

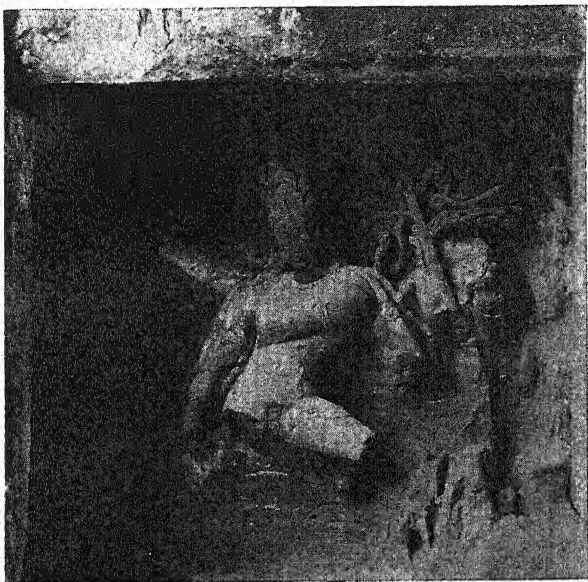
Elemental Power and Virility

The present entrance to the great temple and hall is on the north. Probably, the entrance on the east, at present choked up by debris, was originally the main entrance to the hall and temple. We may therefore enter the temple from the north. As we enter the portico or covered verandah, we see on the right a big carved panel containing a large size figure of great dramatic movement and force. It strikes the key-note of the cave temples of Elephanta. It depicts the "tandava" dance of Siva. These temples are dedicated to Siva, Siva the great Sire—"he of whom growth, increase, prosperity is." He who is "the wearer of Eight Forms, Earth, Air, Water, Fire, Ether, the Sun, the Moon, Sacrificer." He who is "Mind, Matter and Individuality." Siva

impersonates and interprets the elemental force and virility of the eternal struggle—mind and “individuality,” “matter” and environment, nature and nurture. Artists in India, painters, sculptors and architects have been, from times unrecorded in history, pre-occupied with the supreme theme, the theme of the fundamentals of life, of the eternal virility of its conflicts and struggles. Few, very few, places in India have been rendered so truly sacred as the great temple hall at Elephanta. Here the mind and individuality of the Indian sculptor has struggled with determined heroism against “matter” and environment. Here, as, perhaps, at no other single spot in India, his perfect art has carried him to decisive victory. Here, he has not stooped to the carver’s routine which follows soullessly the religious canons, codes, conventions and symbols for the literal and mechanical transcription of lofty ideas and themes. Lofty ideas and themes are not reproduced and enumerated. The sculptor’s perfect art has, here, scored its inherent, decisive and ultimate victory. Lofty ideas and themes are revealed and communicated as live, intimate, realities and experiences. The sculptor’s art crystalises the conflicts, direction and aim of human civilisation. The temple hall of Elephanta has both the primeval, virgin, virility of the forest and the transcendental vision of human emancipation sought by the teachers and prophets of the forest hermitages and “ashrams” of ancient India.

No. 5.

At Elephanta



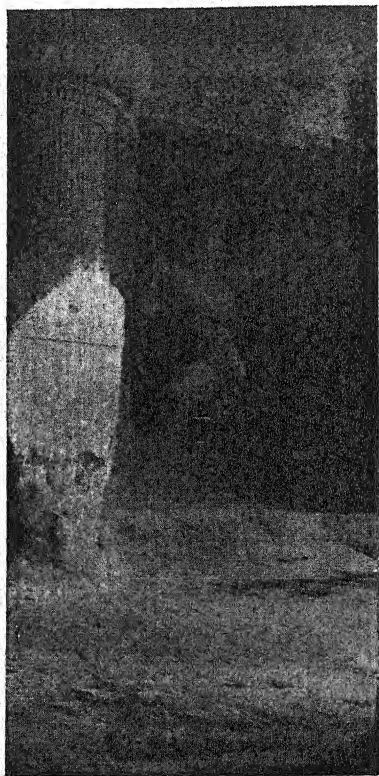
"TANDAVA" DANCE—(1)

Despite absence of the "mudras", the angle of the uplifted fragment of the leg with its gently sliding drapery ends, the vast sweep of the arm across the chest counterbalanced by the downward turn of thought-laden eyes and proud head are eloquent of the movement of the dance of the

"Prince of Dancers."

No. 6.

At Elephanta



"TANDAVA" DANCE—(1)

The rhythmic sway of the body revealed by the flowing, relaxed, contour line at the end of the cross arm mark the sequence of movement in the dance of "Eventide".

No. 1—Dance Outspreading Space

The dance of Siva depicted in this panel has been described in the Sanskrit play "Mudra-Rakshasa" as "the dance to which space is wanting. Lightly treads the god lest he should upset the earth—he cramps his action lest his arms reach beyond the limits of the three worlds and he bends his sparks emitting glances on vacuity lest they should consume the objects on which they gaze." Observe the cramped arm, stiffened into almost a right angle, at the top corner on the right. Observe the bent gaze. The legs of the figure have disappeared. So that, we cannot observe, actually, how "lightly treads the god lest he should upset the earth." But the dignified uplift indicated by the fragment of the leg on the left and the gentle sliding down its side of the drapery ends clearly suggest the light tread. The lower portions of the figure, its hands and arms are broken and could be seen in disjointed sections. Were it not for the sculptor's significant art, both the dance and its theme would thus have remained inarticulate. For, the modern literary pundits would have us believe that the dance in India had little or no importance and less significance except for the conventional code of "mudras" or gestures of the hand and fingers. But this is neither the first time nor the only place where the Indian sculptor's artistic instinct, gifts and individuality have

emancipated art from ancient priestcraft and canons and defeated the dogmatic absurdity of the modern pundits. Despite the absence of the "mudras", the angle of the uplifted fragment of the leg with its gently sliding drapery ends, the vast sweep of the arm across the chest counterbalanced by the magnificent downward turn of thought-laden eyes and proud head and, finally, the rhythmic sway of the body revealed by its flowing contour at the end of the cross arm are eloquent of the movement of the dance which the ancient artist considered essential and indispensable for the dance of the "Prince of Dancers." He was, obviously and rightly, not content with the literal transcription of symbolic conventions, of "mudras" and "lakshanas." The alternate inclinations of the body are not so many abruptly angular "bents." They mark, specifically, the sequence of the rhythmic movement of the dance.

The Eventide Dance

The pensive restraint and dignified rhythm of the eventide, "Sayam-kal", dance of Siva observed in this panel offer the contrast to the more vivacious movement and rhythm of the "tandava" dance shown in the second panel in the west portico of the hall. These dances have been distinguished from the "lasya" dances, or dances with softer rhythm and more distinct lyric objectives, believed to be originally composed by Parvati, the consort of Siva.

They were given by her to Usha from whom the "gopis" of Dwarka received their training in the dance. The women of Saurashtra are said to have received inspiration for the dance from the "gopis." The folk-dances and the current "Garba" form of the socio-religious dances in vogue among the women of Saurashtra and Gujarat incline to the belief that the "lasya" form of the dance first invented and composed by "Parvati" still survives along the coast. The "lasya" form of the dance is not observable in the temple hall of Elephanta. But its memory lingers there. The city of the "Isle of Gold", the ancient name of the island of Elephanta, built by Bannasura recalls the name of his daughter Usha and links time, ancient with modern, and place, the coast from Dwarka to Elephanta, with the "lasya" she taught to the women of Saurashtra and Gujarat and which now survives as "Garba".

Siva Symbols and Attributes

The sculptures in the temples at Elephanta, like the sculptures of most of the Brahmanical cave-temples depict the various episodes associated with Siva, Siva the Hindu conception of the deity incarnate as the primeval energy and power behind natural phenomenon, fertility and destruction.

His common symbols and attributes could be easily identified. His new moon crest, his third eye, placed vertically between the eyebrows denoting vision and

supernatural wisdom penetrating and subjugating the limits of time, his trident, his matted hair, enclosing sometimes the image of Ganga and sometimes the three sacred streams, his serpents, usually with the expanded cobra-hood, his garland, of human skulls, his battle club, his alarm bell, his drum which marks the rhythm of the dance and the rhythm of the primeval creative force of the cosmic time-process, his hand holding a flame or fire of sacrifice and his hands in finger gestures "mudra" assuring protection, prosperity or salvation to his devotees have been generally, executed by the Hindu sculptor in accordance with the ancient religious canons of image-making and with perceptible uniformity.

Common Features in Composition

The scheme of sculptural composition observed in the carved panels follows also a more or less uniform method. Siva and Parvati and the main figures of importance focus the composition by their prominent place, their large scale and emphasised pose. On the extreme sides and at the bottom of the main figures may be found, usually, attendants and musicians occupied in orchestra and in dances. On the central planes, in mid-air as it were, could be discerned the order of deities Indra, Brahama on the right, Vishnu, on the left of Siva. At the top of the composition may be observed the flying figures behind, above or alongside patterned cloud-forms, of "gandharvas",

“apsaras”, “kinnaras” and “vidyadhara” the celestial order of musicians and dancers as well as the figures floating rapidly in the air with heavy loops of garlands towards the central figures of main importance in the composition. Once the eyes get familiar and accustomed to the common iconographic details, symbols and attributes and to the general, almost uniform, scheme of the composition of the sculptures, they are left free to explore and understand not less the specific distinctions in art values and quality than in the obvious difference in the narrative and themes of the sculptures.

Unity, not Uniformity

The uniformity of iconographic details and, not infrequently, of the scheme of composition, have, almost invariably, been accepted by the modern, short-sighted, pundits as evidence of the “unity” of Indian art! It has saved them from the inconvenience of examining and understanding the distinct qualities and values of the sculptor’s art. They proceed with their superlative appreciation of Indian art and sculpture with the tacit assumption that there has been uniformity of qualities and standards at all time, in every place, medium, material and phase of Indian art.

Ellora and Elephanta

They will not observe the difference, for instance, of the “tandava” dance of Siva, the Nataraj the “Prince

of Dancers," depicted in the panel of the verandah of the temple at Elephanta and a similar subject carved in the temple at Ellora. They will observe, in the Elephanta panel for example, Vishnu, the Preserver, riding on his "vehicle" bird Garuda, distinguished by the mace, (gada) in one hand and the conch-shell (shankha) in the other. They will observe Indra, Lord of the Heavens, along with his "vehicle"—the elephant, they will observe Ganesha with a club in his hand and a broken tusk of his elephant trunk and they will observe, say, Brahma Lord of Creation on the top left on his seat carried by "hamsa" (swans). They will observe and identify all these. But they will proceed no further. The identification of the main features and figures of the compositions is necessary and important, not all-important. Obviously, it is not the identity of symbols, of iconographic details or of the general conventions of composition, that distinguishes the sculptor's talent revealed in the "tandava" dance of Siva of the verandah panel at Elephanta from the similar dance carved at Ellora. The distinction of the "Tandava" panel on the verandah of the Elephanta temple is the key-note of the distinction which is, essentially, the triumphant climax of the sculptor's art rarely, very rarely, so expressed and enshrined as at Elephanta.

No. 2 — Bhairava Mahakal Dance

Let us enter the temple hall and keep to the right. At the north end of the western portico would be seen another form of the "tandava" dance of Siva. It is in strong contrast to the dignified restraint of the dance of the eventide we saw in the first panel on the verandah. Siva is nearly twelve feet in height. Of the eight arms he possessed originally, only three remain intact. His legs have disappeared. The rosary of human skulls (rundamala) over his shoulder and down and across his thigh, the weapon thrust in the waist-band, the hand, on the left, holding a long heavy sword, another, on the right, holding a ringing bell and the third, underneath it entwined with the coils of the cobra, holding a bowl, to receive the blood of the victim, the ferocious determination of the features and the rigidity of the lofty crown leave little scope for doubt about the character of the dance. Siva is here portrayed effectively as impersonating the inevitable terror of the phenomena of the destructive forces and energy of the universe.

Poets and Playwrights

The Bhairava or Mahakal dance of Siva is a theme with which the ancient Sanskrit poets and playwrights are found to be constantly pre-occupied. It is described graphically, for instance, in Bhavabhuti's "Malati-Madhava." The poet addresses Siva: —

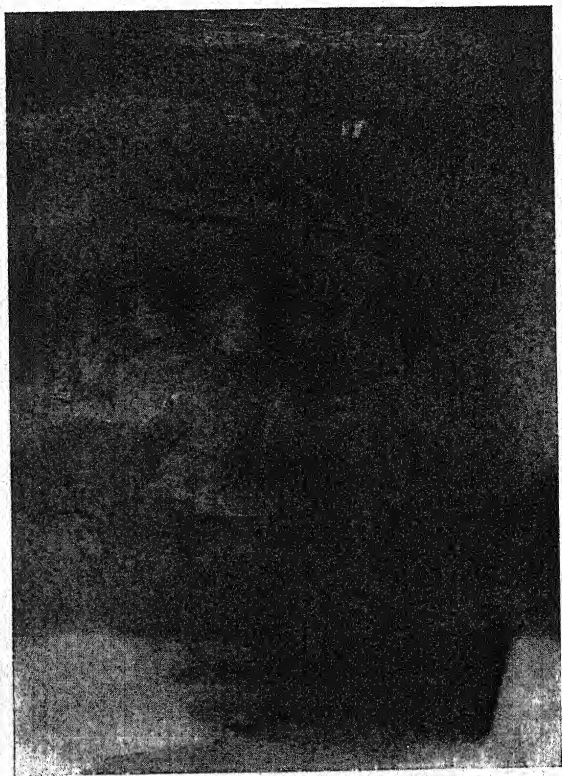
"The Elephant hide that robes thee, to thy steps

Swings to and fro;—the whirling talons rend
The crescent on thy brow;—from the torn orb
The trickling nectar falls, and every skull
That gems thy necklace laughs with horrid life
Attendant spirits tremble and applaud;
The mountain falls beneath the powerful arms,
Around whose length the sable serpents twine
Their swelling forms, and knit terrific bands,
While from the hood expanded frequent flash
Envenomed flames."

At another place, in the same poem, the poet describes the dance again. This time it is Siva speaking as Kapalkundala. He says:—

"The hollow skulls,
That low descending from my neck depend,
Emit fierce music as they clash together,
Or strike the trembling plates that gird my loins.
Loose stream on every side my woven locks
In lengthening braids;—upon my pond'rous staff,
The string of bells, light waving to and fro,
Jangles incessantly; upon my banner floats
Upborne by the wailing breeze, whose tone
Is deepened by the echoes it awakes
Amidst the caverns of each fleshless skull,
That hangs in dread array around my person."

The "swelling forms" of the serpents entwined around the arms and "knit in terrific bands," the

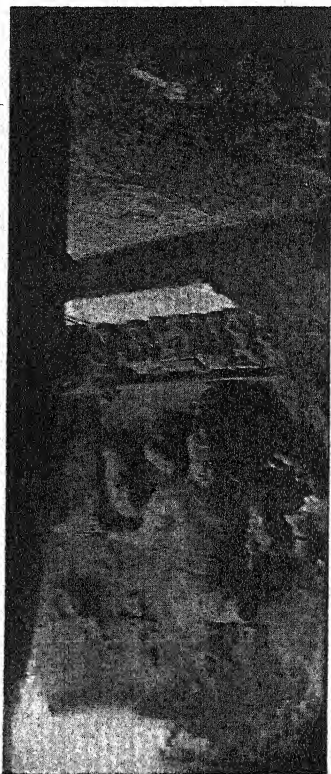


“ KAL-BHAIRAVA ”—(2)

The suspended broad-sword, the elephant hide hurled backwards in the air, the projected bell and bowl and, above all, the forceful thrust forward and sharp angle of the raised leg as well as the tense contour of the body indicate the controlled fury and vehemence of the dance.

No. 8.

At Elephanta



"KAL-BHAIRAVA"—(2)

The dynamic power of the art of the Indian sculptor will remain unnoticed if we refuse to examine or understand the movement of the dance, of the overpowering utter abandon and unswerving, elemental, subjugating rhythm of the dance.

skulls "descending" from the neck striking the "trembling plates" that gird the loins of Siva, the incessant "jangles" of the bell are, of course, immediately noticeable in the sculpture. But the dynamic power of the art of the Indian sculptor will remain unnoticed and unknown if we proceed no further than the identification of iconographic details, of conventional limitations or the enumerations of symbols, if we refuse to examine and understand the manner in which the sculptor interpreted in stone the movement of the dance. Twenty photographs will not exhaust the number of the aspects from which the movement may be discerned. And, only a draughtsman, as clear-sighted and as talented in his drawing as the sculptor has been in stone-cutting, could give some idea of the movement, of the overpowering utter abandon and unswerving, elemental, subjugating, rhythm of the dance.

Controlled Fury

To those who would understand the dance and the power of the art of the sculptor who interpreted the dance, the loose drop of the garland of skulls, on the right, gliding down the arm and over the leg, the suspended broad-sword, the elephant hide hurled backwards in the air, the "steps" of Siva "swings to and fro," the "awful head," the "lowering eye that glows," and, enwraps in its "fiery circle" the "spheres within its terrible circumference," the pro-

jected bell and bowl and, above all, the forceful thrust forward of the leg, on the right with the garland loop, would reveal the controlled fury and determined vehemence of the dance movement. Compare the forceful forward thrust and sharp angle of the leg in this sculpture and the restrained uplift and curving angle of the leg shown in the first panel of the Siva dance, the contrast of the dance movement, expressive of the contrast in the dance themes, would be self-evident. Compare again the tense contour of the body just opposite the projected leg of the Bhairava and the almost relax contour line of the body opposite the uplifted leg of Siva in the first panel. The contrast in movement and theme would again be self-evident.

A Puzzle Game

At the bottom of the panel may be observed a male and two female figures on the side opposite to them can also be seen two dwarfs and a small figure just underneath Siva. At the top of the panel, in a clearly set carved frieze may be seen a peculiar dome-shaped form with a curved groove, hook in the middle and a bar at the top. For years it has continued to be the puzzle game for antiquarians. It is found also in the panel of Siva and Parvati in Kailas in more than one place. But the middle groove is modified there. It changes its direction and the top bar is accentuated as a cross. At

Ellora it has been observed in one of the sculptures over Ravan's hands. It has a face in the centre resembling a "kirtimukha." The Kolahpur cave shows it with a distinct cross but without the middle groove. Whatever may be the true significance of the symbolic form, its importance cannot be denied. For, as shown in the present panel, it is the subject for adoration of the "gandharvas" and the "apsaras" floating "jauntily" in the skies.

No. 3—Marriage of Siva and Parvati

As we turn from the "Bhairava" and walk along the verandah of the Western portico we see on its ceiling faint remnants of the original patterns of plants, flowers and animals which once decorated the hall. At the end of the portico opposite the "Bhairava" would be seen the panel narrating the marriage of Siva and Parvati. The theme is, undoubtedly, a common subject both for the ancient poet and the sculptor. But its version in stone, achieved in the rock panel here, is, equally undoubtedly, uncommon. Probably, it is this panel that led Fergusson to conjecture that the hall was designed as a nuptial hall. Kalidas, one of the greatest poet and playwright of ancient India, has given a graphic description of the nuptials. Some of the passages of his poem "Kumar Sambhava" would indicate the affinity of the ancient poet with the ancient sculptor.

The Bride Parvati

Says Kalidas:—

“And she, their child, upon her bridal day
Bears her dear parents’ every thought away —

Each noble matron of Himalaya’s race
Folds his dear Uma in a long embrace,
Pours blessings on her head,—

Then to a court with canopies o’erhead
A crowd of noble dames the maiden led —
A court for solemn rites, where gems and gold
Adorn the pillars that the roof uphold.

Through her long tresses one a flower wreath
wound,

And one with fragrant grass her temples
crowned,

While o’er her head sweet clouds of incense
rolled,

To dry and perfume every shining fold.
Bright dyes of saffron and the scented wood
Adorned her beauty, till the maiden stood
Fairer than *Ganga* where the love birds play
O’er sandy islets in her silvery bay.

The happy mother took the golden dye
And raised to her young *Uma*’s beaming eye —

Then swelled her bosom with maternal pride
 As thus she decked her darling for a bride —
 Oh, she had longed to trace on that fair brow
 The nuptial line, yet scarce could mark it
 now!

* * * *

On *Uma's* rounded arm the woollen band
 Was fixed securely by the Nurse's hand —
 Blind with tears that filled her swimming eye,
 In vain the mother strove that band to tie.
 Spotless as curling foamflakes stood she there,
 As yielding soft, as graceful and as fair —
 Or like the glory of an autumn night,
 Robed by the full moon in a veil of light."

Siva as a Bridegroom

The poet describes Siva as a bridegroom. He describes the contrast between the normal appearance of Siva and his looks and demeanour as a bridegroom. If we look towards the Bhairava panel on the opposite side of this panel we would at once notice the fact that the contrast depicted by the poet is made more than apparent by the sculptor. Says the poet:—

"His own dire vesture took a shape as fair
 As gentle bridegroom e'er could wish to
 wear —
 The withering skull that glazed the eye with
 dread,

Shone a bright coronal to grace his head;
That Elephant's hide the god had worn of
old

Was now a silken robe inwrought with gold;
Ere this body was with dust besprent,
Soft ungent now it shed delightful scent;
And that mid-eye which, glittering like a
star,

Shot the wild terror of its glance afar —
So softly now its glorious radiance beamed —
A mark of glory on his forehead seemed.
His twining serpents, destined still to be
The pride and honour of the deity,
Changed but their bodies—in each sparkling
crest

The blazing gems still shone their loveliest.
What need of jewels on the brow of him
Who wears the crescent Moon?

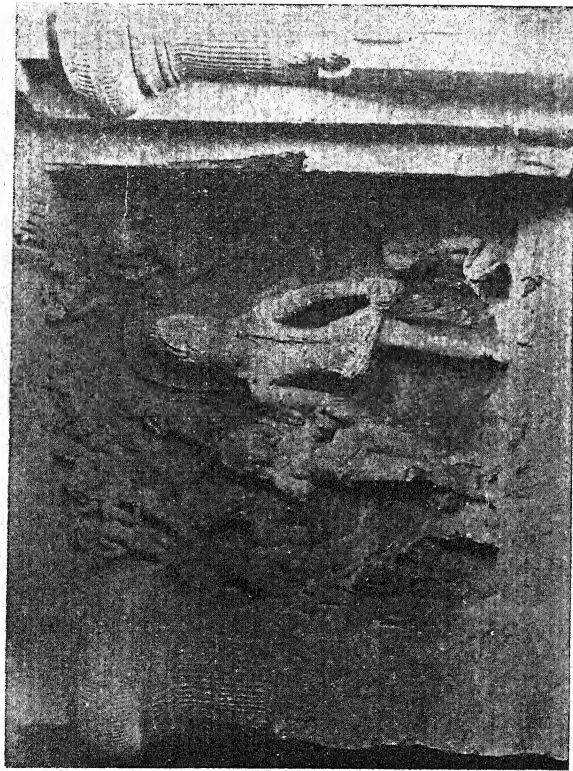
* * * *

The matrons followed him, a saintly throng,
Their ear-rings waving as they dashed along —
Sweet faces, with such glories round them
shed

As made the air one lovely lotus bed.
On flew these bright ones — ”

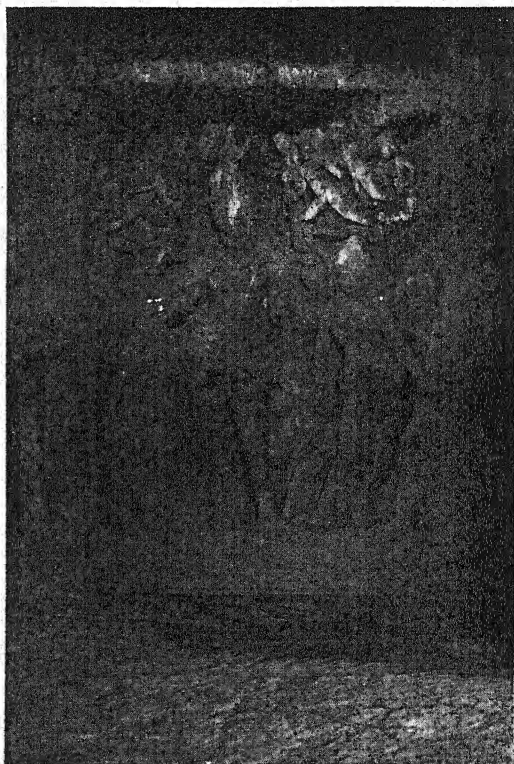
The Meeting—The Lover and the Maid

Kalidas, the ancient poet, is great in his graphic gifts. His pictures of the solemn marriage proces-



"MARRIAGE OF SIVA-PARVATI"—(3)

The unerring concentration of the sculptor towards the interpretation of the poetic solemnity of the main incident of his theme is an unmistakable and indisputable triumph of his art.



“GANGAVATARAN”—(4)

The divergence of lines in this composition could be explained by the slightly inclined head of Siva and, decidedly, by his arm which lingers lovingly over the shoulders of Parvati who with coeuttish abandon of her extended left arm, of the reluctant right leg and the gentle stoop of the shoulder plays the eternally elusive and seductive feminine.

observe them as they "scarce dared to trust the rapturous gazing yet," and, observe how the father gently and with affectionate reverence pushes from behind the shy, bashful, bride. The sculptor has immortalised here the poetry of a psychological incident understood and experienced by any lover and any maid, any time and anywhere. It is true that the figure of Parvati appears to have been, as already observed by Burgess, "one of the best proportioned and most carefully executed in the cave." And, it is also true that the crown and the dress of Siva has been found by him to have been carved also "with more than usual minuteness." The "proportion" the careful "execution" and "minuteness" noticeable in individual figures is, however, not the sole or the best claim of the panel. The unerring concentration of the sculptor towards the interpretation of the poetic solemnity of the main incident of his theme is its unmistakable and indisputable triumph. The "proportion" the careful "execution" of details and "minuteness" in individual figures are all subordinated to accentuate, deliberately, the "proud surprise" in the erect head of Siva, the bride's "true love's momentary shame" in the slight inclined head and nervous arm of Parvati and in the affectionate push from behind by her father.

At the bottom of the panel, on the right, may be seen the figure of Brahma crouching near the altar of the sacred fire officiating as the chief priest

conducting the marriage ritual. Vishnu is seen behind him with a "peculiar cylindrical cap" with his "abundant" hair, his lotus and his "chakra". Observe the figure of a woman, on the right, holding her drapery in the left hand. This figure and the figure, particularly of a floating "apsara" on the left corner over Parvati indicate the skill with which the sculptor has rendered natural gestures and movement as well as significant modelling. On the extreme left corner is seen a male figure with curled hair, like a wig, a large crescent back of his head and a large pot of water in his hands. This is Chandra the Moon-God, carrying water for ceremonial purposes.

No. 4—Descent of the Ganges (Gangavatarana)

This panel is usually noticed for the three-headed female figure which emerges out of a bowl or shell over the crown of Siva. The figure is said to represent the descent of the Ganges from heaven and its meeting (at Prayaga Allahabad) with the two other sacred rivers Yamuna and Saraswati. The junction is described as the "three-plaited locks" ("triveni sangam"). The obvious rendering of the metaphor is, certainly, a peculiarity of the panel. It is a novel feature. The artistic importance of the panel is denoted, however, by the broad sweep of the main lines of composition. Compare the converging and almost parallel lines in the preceding panel of the Marriage of Siva and Parvati with the strong diver-

gence of lines marked in the figures of Siva and Parvati of this panel. The divergence could be and is explained by the slightly inclined head of Siva and, decidedly, by his arm which lingers lovingly over the shoulders and under the chin of Parvati. Parvati plays the eternally illusive and seductive feminine. The coquettish abandon of her extended left arm and of the reluctant right leg, the yielding drop of the right arm and the gentle stoop of the shoulder, induced by Siva's encircling arm, portray eloquently the perpetual hide-and-seek of the lovers. Their smiles and their eyes are no longer of those, in the preceding panel, who "scarce dared to trust the rapturous gazing." And it should not be surprising if the kneeling figure with the dagger at his waist and hair in ringlets on the left at the foot of Siva happens to be that of "Kama," Cupid, who offers the tribute of one whose ambition is accomplished.

Beauty of Indian Costumes and Ornaments

The dwarf with the wig of plaited curls, a fly-whisk in his left and a cobra in his right hand has a singular tortoise hanging down and attached to his necklace. The female dwarf on the extreme right has also uncommon peculiarities. Her ear-rings are elliptical, her chignon is unusually large, and, she carries, tied with cords, a bundle on her left shoulder. The significant manner in which the Indian sculptor almost invariably, explored the beauty of Indian

costumes and drapery has remained unexamined, if not altogether unmentioned, by the majority of the exponents of Indian art obsessed with "origins" or "motifs" with dates or with the enumeration of iconographic details. The drapery shown and suggested on the figures in this temple reveal the careful thought which guided the Indian sculptor. The figure of Parvati, in the present panel, with the loose robe over her right arm and the corner of the dress just over the ankle stretched towards the leg shows the manner in which, despite the apparently static idea of the heavy ear-rings, numerous necklaces, armlets and bracelets, a girdle with bejewelled clasp and weighty anklets, he has succeeded in adjusting the lines of the drapery to the lines of movement of the composition.

Brahma, with his lotus seat carried by swans and Indra with his elephant may be seen on the left. On the right may be observed Vishnu with his "Garuda," without moustaches, or the "tilak" mark but with his curly wig of hair.

The figures over these deities of the messengers, of "gandharvas" and "apsaras" have been set off by cloud forms of unusual clearness and distinction. One of them, perhaps, the biggest with a lofty head-dress and twofold necklace carries a long parcel with flowers and narrow ribbons carved around its surface. Notice also the head-dress of the "apsara" over the figure of Parvati.

No. 5—The Trimurti

We now approach one of the objects of axial importance to the temple. I am, deliberately, using the phrase. For the figure of "Trimurti" which we now approach cannot be understood completely without a clear conception of its place in the architectural plan and design of the temple. Most of the visitors who at present enter the temple hall from the portico on the north feel and vaguely realise the irresistible power of the colossal three-figured bust of "Trimurti." But there was nothing that was vague with those who planned and designed the temple hall of Elephanta. And, it is not an accident that the visitor who enters the hall from the northern portico feels overpowered by the vast conception, the massive scale and proportions of the "Trimurti". Its height totals over seventeen feet. The maximum width of the three heads measures nearly twenty-three feet. The length of the three faces varies between four to five feet. The hollowed recess occupied by the figure is over ten feet deep and twenty feet wide. Its base rises to nearly three feet. The high-peaked pyramid of the lofty crown enriched with the perfection of the carver's skill has been often admired whole-heartedly. Mr. Erskine, speaking about the jewel on the front, says that it is "certainly one of the finest specimens of Hindu taste anywhere to be met with; some of

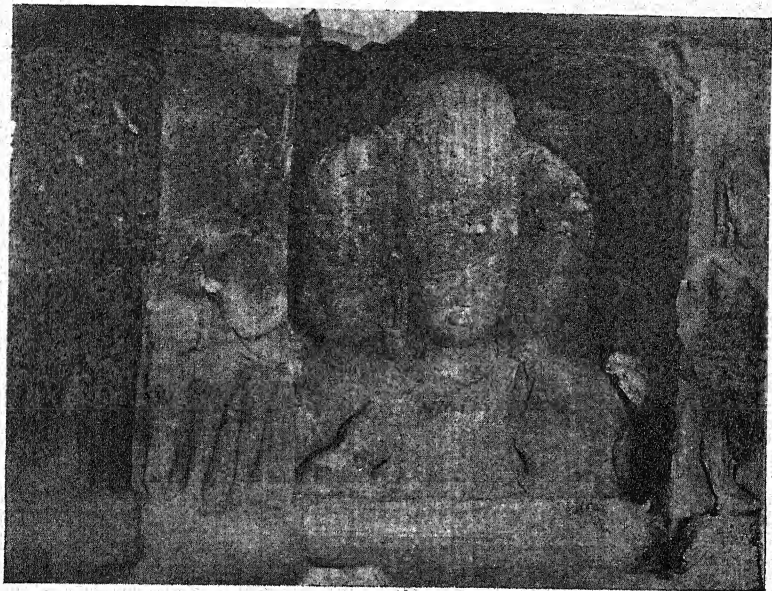
the fancy-ornaments strongly resemble those used in heraldry. The hanging pendants have an elegant effect. The middle is occupied by a circular band of precious stones adorning and limiting the front; while below, another rich bandage, also adorned with cut stones, passes round the head-dress."

The difference in the expression and features of the three faces of the "Trimurti" has given the occasion and the excuse for many elaborate debates about their identity. The usual belief is to identify the faces, from the left to right, as Siva the Destroyer, Brahma the Creator, and Vishnu the Preserver. But the smaller size of the face on the right side, its elegance, its resemblance to certain feminine traits observable by comparison particularly with the figure of Parvati in the adjoining Ardhanarishwar panel have led to uncertainty and speculations. These speculations about the identity of the faces will, perhaps, continue, uncertain and unreconciled. But there is nothing that is uncertain about their ultimate and inherent significance. The sculptor has given the decisive help. He does not leave the visitor waiting for the erudite entanglements and trifles of the archaeologist or the iconographer. The perpetual process of creation balancing the fury with the placidity of Destruction and Preservation, initiating order out of chaos and stirring those vital impulses and visions that have led mankind to culture and civilisation finds here an

eloquent expression. The smile, the almost vicious delight, of the Destroyer, on the left, and the placid, almost apathetic, contentment of the Preserver on the right, may be seen, balanced by the closed, determined lips and thought-enburdened eyes of the central figure, of the Creator. It strikes the dominant note, the note of the majesty of creative thought.

Creative Thought

Rodin's "Penseur," to mention a modern example, attempting a, more or less, similar theme has been universally and, rightly, regarded as one of the masterpieces, of the sculptor's art. But Rodin's conception of his subject was, evidently and essentially, negative, groping, desperate and human. Rodin translated thought, not creative thought. Rodin's "Penseur" appears weighed down and nearly crushed by thought. Rodin's "Penseur" thinks and sees without hope and with little faith. Time and space submit no aspiring secret to his weary gaze. The anonymous sculptor of the "Trimurti" at Elephanta searched, on the contrary, for a positive, definite, complete synthesis of thought. He recognised the ultimate implications, the threefold aspects of thought. Thought preserved as well as destroyed and, what is more, created conditions in the universe which gave indisputable significance to life, time and space. In the scheme of crowns tapering towards the apex, in the lengthened fury, the irregular arch of the eyebrows, the clutch

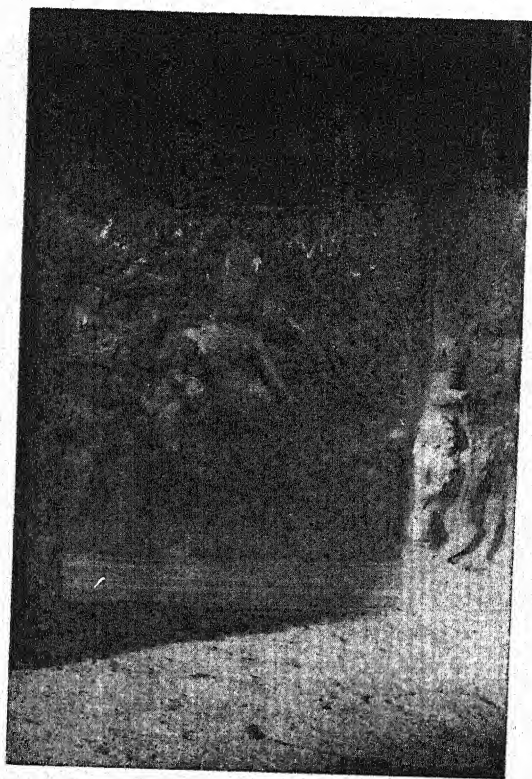


"TRIMURTI"—(5)

The uplifting majesty of creative thought of and for all time has been translated in the central figure, indisputably and irresistibly. Over the expanded curves of the shoulders emerges triumphant the towering peak of the crowned head with thought-laden eyes and resolute lips. The struggle is just over and finished. The lips have not yet relaxed their determination. But the drooping eyes and the expanding curved lines of the shoulders denote the surging of creative thought.

No. 12.

At Elephanta



"ARDHANARISHWAR"—(6)

The symbolic union of sexes, the representation of creative power, is of considerable antiquity in ancient folklore.

and snarl of the cobra and the parted lips with a projecting tusk and elongated features of the Destroyer, in the shorter, more elegant and placidly brooding features of the Preserver, on the right, the sculptor has recognised the two extreme aspects of thought. For him, however, these aspects are only incidental, subsidiary and subordinate to the central aspect. The uplifting majesty of creative thought of and for all time has been translated in the central figure, indisputably and irresistibly. Over the expanded curves of the shoulders emerges triumphant the towering peak of the crowned head with thought laden eyes and resolute lips. The struggle is just over and finished. The lips have not yet relaxed their determination. But the drooping eyes and the expanding curved lines of the shoulders denote the surging of creative thought. Creative thought has not merely balanced and subdued wanton destruction and stagnating placidity. It swells towards the majestic consciousness of final victory and of enduring significance for mankind. No wonder W. Cohn sees in the composition a "divinity" so rarely and so convincingly created by art. No wonder it must be, as he says, seen to believe, to understand and feel convinced about its victory. The frantic but altogether necessary efforts of the moderns, the contemporaries and descendants of Rodin who, in their revolt against the "pretty" over-mature elegance of Greek sculpture, alternate between empty violence and dead soli-

dity will some day lead them to the secret of art which animates the Elephanta figures carved and arising out from their matrix.

No. 6—"Ardhanarishwar" Sex Compliments

The panel adjoining the "Trimurti", on the left, contains a colossal figure, half-male and half-female, about sixteen feet high, symbolic of the union of sexes, one complimentary of another, the positive and passive aspects of creative power. Burgess thinks that "such a representation of creative power must be of considerable antiquity, for exactly such a statue as this is mentioned by Porphyry as having been described to Bardesanes of Babylon by the Indian Sandeles and his companions, ambassador in the time of Elagabalus, about A. D. 220; and what is curious, they described it as being of ten or twelve cubits in height, in a large cave in a mountain, standing erect, the right side being male from head to foot, the left female, and over the arms a number of angels, particulars that could only refer to something very like what is actually found here."

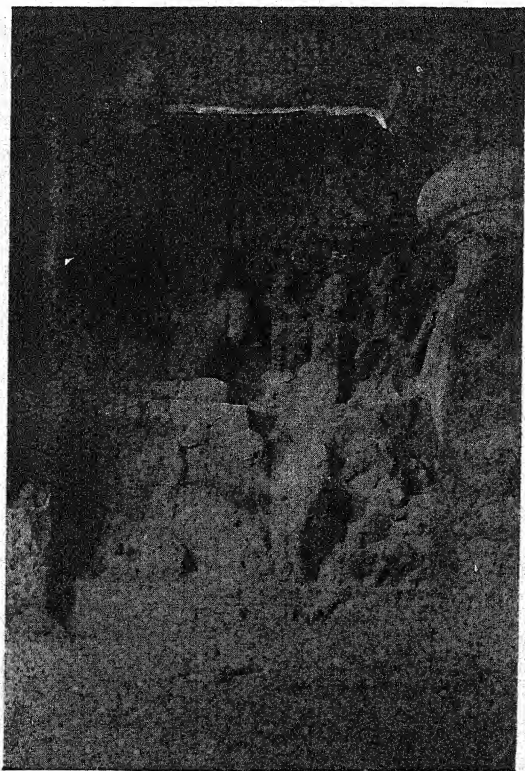
He also gives the translation of a passage from a fragment of Porphyry's lost treatise de Styge as rendered by Stobaeus—"Now they said that there was also a natural and vast cave in a very lofty mountain nearly about the middle of the land. And in this cave there is a statue, which they guess to be of ten or twelve cubits. It stands upright with the hands

extended in the form of a cross. And the right of its face is that of a man, while the left is that of a woman. Now in the same way the right arm too and the right foot and the whole half are of a man, and the left of a woman; so that on seeing it we are astonished that we can see the dissimilarity of two sides in one body without division. In this statue they say are carved round the right breast the sun, round the left the moon, and down the two arms are cleverly carved a number of angels and all things that exist in the universe; that is, the heaven, and mountains, and the sea, and the river of ocean, and plants, and animals, and in a word all things that are." The Orphic hymn, Stobaeus gives us,—“Zeus was a male, Zeus became a deathless damsel”—indicate the close analogy between the conceptions evolved by nature-worship common to both the ancient Indian and the ancient Greek. The sex distinctions noticeable on the limbs could also be observed in the ornaments, head-dress and ear-rings. Near the central figure, on the right could be seen a woman carrying a flip-flap the “chauri” or “chammar”, the usual emblem of royalty. Its head-dress is carved meticulously, the crescent, the chignon, the ear-rings and the necklaces are all distinguished. By her side is another woman with a costume or rather a wrap which falls across the breast from each shoulder to the waist downwards. The edges of a “choli” or bodice are clearly marked. The wrap or the robe

falling over her left arm and suspended in its drop towards the ground somewhere near the anklet accentuate the rhythmic beauty of the movement. She is, evidently, carrying a dressing or jewel box. Compare the figure with a more upright but none the less graceful figure on the opposite corner. The central figure is surrounded with the usual groups of deities, flying angels, "gandharvas" and "apsaras". Brahma, found here on the extreme left with his swan seat, shown without the "vedas", the sacred books, suggests the conclusion that the figures in this cave were carved and executed before the modern "puranic" interpretations and even interpolations. The fact may be taken as indicative of the way in which the freedom of the sculptor of the period differed from the subservience of the later decadent craftsmen whose images were no more and no less than literal transcripts from routine codes and manuals. The figures on the clouds at the top of the panel the one with a dagger and the woman with a round object are easily discernible. The figure of "Nandi", Siva's pet, the bull, receives here unusual prominence. It is, decidedly, a noteworthy fragment of animal sculpture.

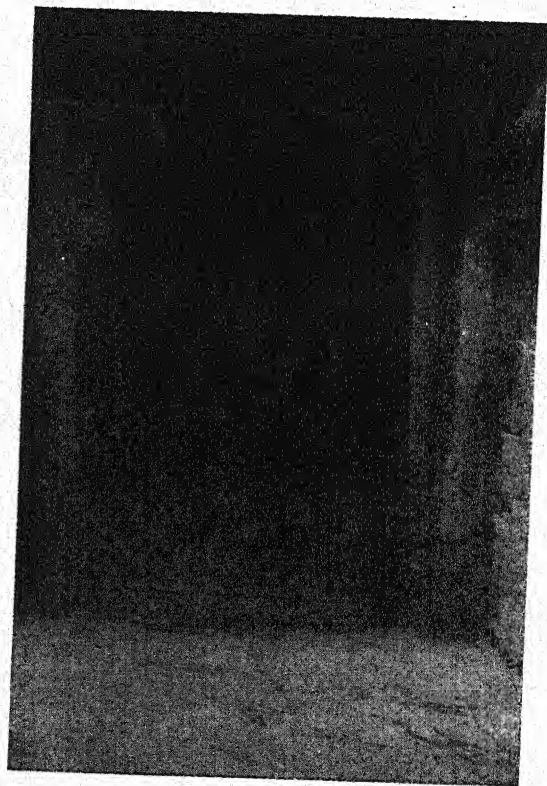
No. 7—Siva and Parvati in Kailas

The extreme panel on the verandah, next to the "ardhanarishwar", reveals another reposeful composition of Siva and Parvati in Kailas, the celestial



“SIVA-PARVATI IN KAILAS”—(7)

The reposeful recline of Siva's body indicate the theme and the clear precision of cloud forms as well as the arrangement of the flying figures suggest the strong, almost severe, architectural composition.



"RAVANNA UNDER KAILAS"—(8)

The irregular and overcrowded formation of excited figures, the perturbed, almost terror-stricken figure of Parvati and the tremendous exertion and strain of Ravanna are in strong contrast to the repose suggested by the carved panel of "Kailas" at the opposite end of the verandah.

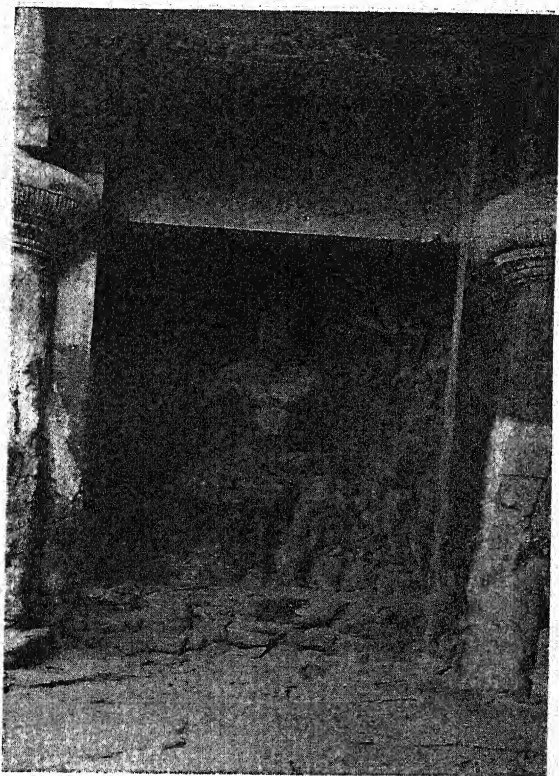
mountain. The main figures are mostly mutilated. The arms of Siva and Parvati, portion of their legs and limbs and the figures underneath the seat of Siva are all broken. There is, however, enough of the reposeful recline of Siva's body, of the upward tilt of shoulder and gentle turn of the head towards the right to help us to realise the significance of the composition. The figure of "Parvati is in fragments but the usual pendant tassel ornament may be noticed and the left arm, right thigh and leg may be seen by the garment which draped her. Behind her stands another woman with a child astride. Probably, it is "Kartikēya", son of Siva, the War-Lord. Over the central figures may be noticed the rock-formations carved into more or less regular patterns or frets distributed over uneven ground. They are another of the pet theme of speculation for antiquarians. The "stupa" device which was seen in the "Kal Bhairav" panel No. 2, the motif that has set the archaeologists working and wondering, is also found here. Notice the "rishi" figure at the top scattering flowers from a basket. The rock formations, conjectured as the hills of "Kailas", and the cloud formations over them seem to be carved in this panel with rare precision and clearness. Combined with this precision, the placing and arrangement of the flying figures give the composition of this panel a strong, almost severe, architectural emphasis.

No. 8—Ravana Under Kailas

In the panel on the opposite side of the verandah is carved the story of Ravana, King of Ceylon, uplifting the celestial mountain Kailas. His ambition was to carry, or as it is said kidnap, Siva as the most powerful ally against Rama. Here again the sculptures of main interest are all in fragments. Siva's arms are broken and Parvati could be faintly recognised by her torso. Ravana may be seen underneath the seat of Siva with twenty arms, most of them broken, and with a sword dangling at his waist. The irregular and overcrowded formation of excited figures at the top, the tremendous exertion and strain seen in the way which Ravana who has turned his back towards the spectator attempts to lift the Kailas mountain, at the bottom and the perturbed almost terror-stricken figure of Parvati moving aside in alarm together with the resolute mien of Siva, in the centre of the panel is in strong and obvious contrast to the panel on the opposite side. The unperturbed, calm, godly strength of Siva manifest in the slight, almost imperceptible, movement of the body, the arm which assures protection to Parvati and the leg which crushes Ravana to defeat and humility, can be easily recognised and understood.

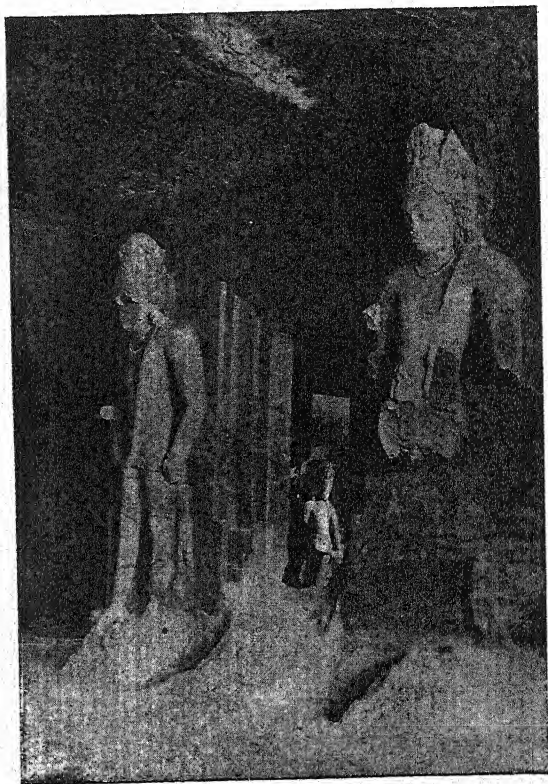
No. 9—Siva, Mahayogi or Dharmaraja

We have completed the circuit of the main hall of the temple and as we emerge again for the portico on



“SIVA-MAHAYOGI”—(9)

The intellectual ascetic has exercised irresistible appeal over the mind of Indian artists. No wonder they translated him in metal, stone, wood and pigment and assigned him prominence in the religious edifices of Brahmins and Buddhist alike.



DWARPAIA AT THE LINGA SHRINE

The majestic proportions, the erect, gigantic sweep upwards of the figures relieved against the architectural severity of the plain walls of the shrine chamber, the sombre, profound, cast of their crowned head and features evoke unqualified admiration.

the north we see Siva sculptured as the "Mahayogi", the great ascetic, or "Dharmaraja" in the last panel of the series. The ascetic pose of Siva, as seen in this panel, resembling the common pose in the images of Buddha has puzzled many antiquarians. But the "imitated" pose is not the sole problem. The position of the panel is also, or rather should be also, a subject of fruitful discussion. The lotus stalk underneath Siva's seat surrounded by two figures, as in the padmasana figures of Buddha and similar details strengthen apparently the belief of those who think that the ascetic pose of Siva is derived from that of Buddha. Siva's "mukuta" or crown is also decorated with three knobs and the large elongated aureole usually associated with the images of Buddha. The heavenly minstrels, the attendants among the rocks and the plantain trees nearly always suggestive of forest hermitages leave little doubt about Siva's attitude of contemplation. Siva submitted to the penance, it is said, when Devi, his consort, died of inconsolable grief evoked by the insult of her father Daksha who refused to invite her and her husband at his "Great Sacrifice."

The Intellectual Ascetic

Contemplation is often the Indian form of penance. But contemplation, pure or objective thought, if it may be so called, and its infinite range and regions of exploration are a theme of undying interest

for the Indian mind. There are few passages in Indian imaginative literature that could rival the beauty of those which describe with graphic precision the mind of the thinkers, the yogis, the intellectual ascetics, and their unswerving concentration on thought. For example, this is how a yogi would be described:—

“Calm as a full cloud resting on a hill,
A waveless lake when every breeze is still,
Like a torch burning in a sheltered spot —
So still was he, unmoving breathing not.”

This is how he “lived for prayer and solitary thought,”:—

“At all the body’s ninefold gates of sense
He had barred in pure Intelligence,
To ponder on the Soul which sages call
Eternal Spirit, highest, over all.”

Or again, take this description:—

“Absorbed in holiest thought, erect and still,
The Hermit rested on the gentle hill.”

No wonder these mental conceptions universal in ancient India should have exercised their irresistible appeal over the minds of the artists. No wonder they were translated in, metal, stone, wood and pigment for decorating the religious edifices and for gratifying the religious impulses of Brahamins and Buddhists alike. The question of the derivation or even of the imitation of the yogi image outside the common intellectual traditions of the people of India is, essen-

tially, if not entirely, irrelevant. But such a rational understanding does not, it would appear, suit the crude ambitions and interests of the antiquarians. Volumes have been written and many ingenious and often futile explanations have been invented by them for the yogi image.

Over the figure of Vishnu in this panel has been observed a figure on horse-back, hoof, saddle, saddle-cloth, girth and bridle have been traced. Erskine compares it with the Makara in the "Ardhanarishwara panel." If it is a horse, it is, he says, the "only figure of that noble animal which appears in these sculptures." Burgess maintains that "it is difficult to understand how any one could doubt from its being a horse unless from imperfect examination." Note the drapery ends, carved with uncommon skill, of the floating figures over the main figures of this panel.

The Linga Shrine

The shrine nearer the western portico of the hall, assumed by some of the western writers as a "chapel" is really the main shrine for worship. It contains the "linga", the large stone symbolic of creative energy, worshipped by Siva devotees. Its approximate area is the area covered by four columns of the hall. Just near and over the top of the shrine chamber are discontinued the architraves which connect the columns in the hall. The area of the

shrine chamber is thus distinctly marked out. The four doors of the chamber have plain, unadorned jambs. The sockets in the floor and ceiling suggest the place for the door-posts. The chamber interior is entirely plain with the "linga" altar over nine feet square and about three feet high. The floor of the chamber is nearly four feet from the floor of the hall.

The "Dwarpalas"

One of the incredible enigmas of the current fashionable literature on Indian art is the amazing complacency with which its exponents speak of Indian sculpture uniformly and, as it were, in the bulk. The varying, grades, dimensions, qualities, place or period of Indian sculpture are of practically little or no significance to them. Their imposed, arbitrary and rigid, stereotyped formula about "schools" and undefined and, often overlapping, "styles" have created for Indian sculpture a cast-iron uniformity which it does not, very fortunately, possess. When the artist escapes the erudite irrelevancies and massive muddle of the antiquarians, he will be able to see more clearly the rich, almost infinite, diversity of Indian art and sculpture. He will see, what few, very few of the antiquarians have seen, the unquestionable artistic qualities of, say, the "Dwarpalas," or the guardians of the gate, of the Elephanta temple. Burgess was, it is true, one of the few who recognised "the style of

sculpture" of these "Dwarpalas" as, on the whole, "superior to that of many other figures in the cave."

Academic "Style"

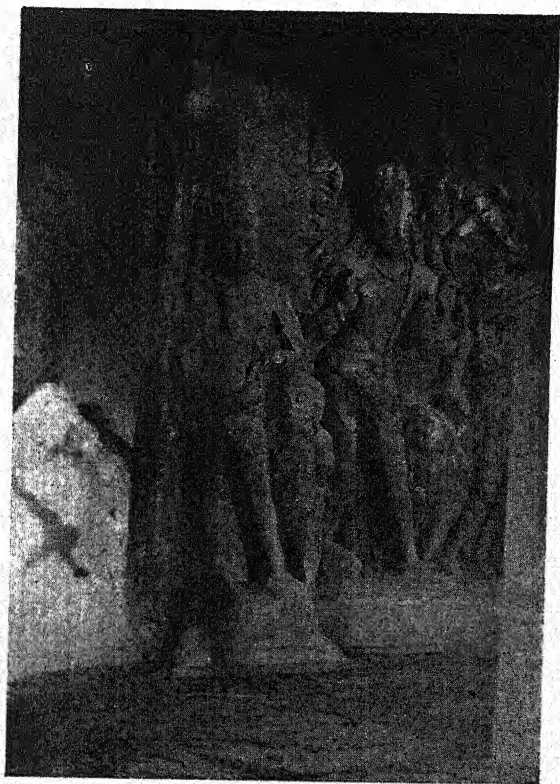
But the antiquarians who have hitherto usurped the domain of Indian art see in the "style of sculpture" not the style, quality or mode of living art but a "style" or "school" determined by a date or decorated by iconography. The "Dwarpalas" of the Elephanta temples demand a bigger volume than the present one for complete justice to their artistic values. For the present, it would be sufficient to observe the "Dwarpalas" adjoining the "Trimurti" and those adjoining or rather distinguishing the main shrine chamber and to notice carefully the difference between the playful, relaxed attitudes of the "Trimurti" "Dwarpalas" and the severe austerity of the "Dwarpalas" of the main shrine. The Trimurti "Dwarpalas" are of uneven height. The "Dwarpala" on the right pilaster is about one foot lower than the other. It is crowned, as usual, with the lofty head-dress decorated with pointed coronal of plates, crescent and stars on the sides mounted by a motif corrugated like a shell and spread like a fan. The left arm of the figure reclines on the head of the "Pisacha" or the dwarf demon, about seven feet high. The "Dwarpala" on the other side, to the left, is broken except for the head and the shoulders. The ornaments of the two figures are, more or less, similar. But their

attitudes differ. Both of them appear playful. The one on the right is however more subdued than the one on the left. The figure on the left can scarcely disguise its tolerant smile at the gay antics of the dancing dwarf.

Now turn to the majestic grandeur and proportions of the "Dwarpalas" who guard the main shrine.

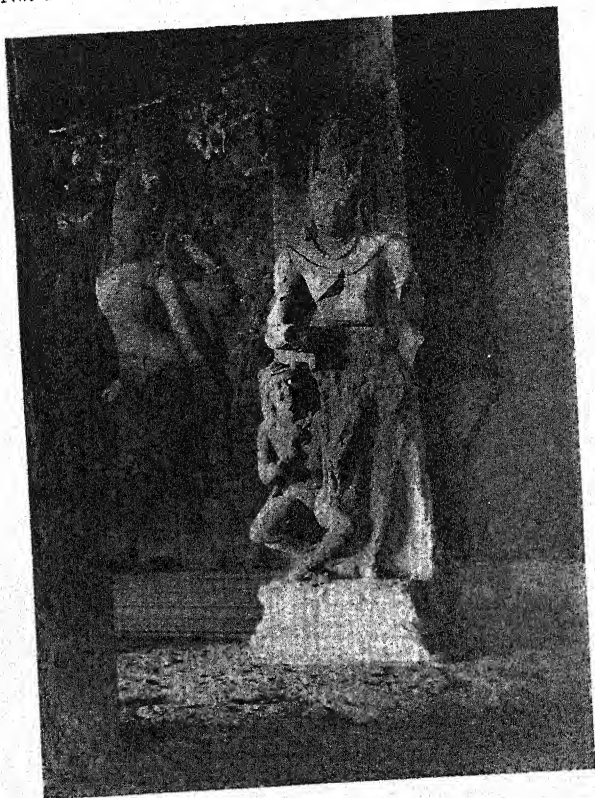
Few drawings and fewer photographs can give an adequate idea of the indelible impression the sculptor's lofty conception, his supreme instinct and his art create. The erect, gigantic, sweep upwards of the figures relieved against the architectural severity of the plain walls of the shrine chamber, their poise and the profound, almost sombre, cast of their crowned head and features challenge immediate attention and evoke unqualified admiration. But the sculptor's art has been a language foreign to the overwhelming majority of the exponents of Indian art interested in and accustomed to only the origins, "influences" and dates of Indian sculpture. Some of them have thus discovered Egyptian analogies as an "influence" in the sculptured guardians of the main shrine. Some of them would, of course, see in the "influence" the origin of Indian sculpture. None of them has cared to see Indian sculpture. They are all entirely unconcerned about the Indian sculptor's art.

Since rational explanation and estimates of Indian art and sculpture are straightforward and since straightforward statements are out of mode, the hunt



DWARPALA ADJOINING "TRIMURTI"

The Dwarpala to the right of the "Trimurti" is playful but more subdued than the one on the left. The divergent lines of the composition of "Gangavataran" (p. 41) are here clearly indicated.



DWARPALA ADJOINING "TRIMURTI"

The sculpture of the Dwarfpalas is, on the whole, "superior to that of many other figures in the cave." The figure on the left to the "Trimurti" can scarcely disguise its tolerant smile at the gay antics of the dancing dwarf.

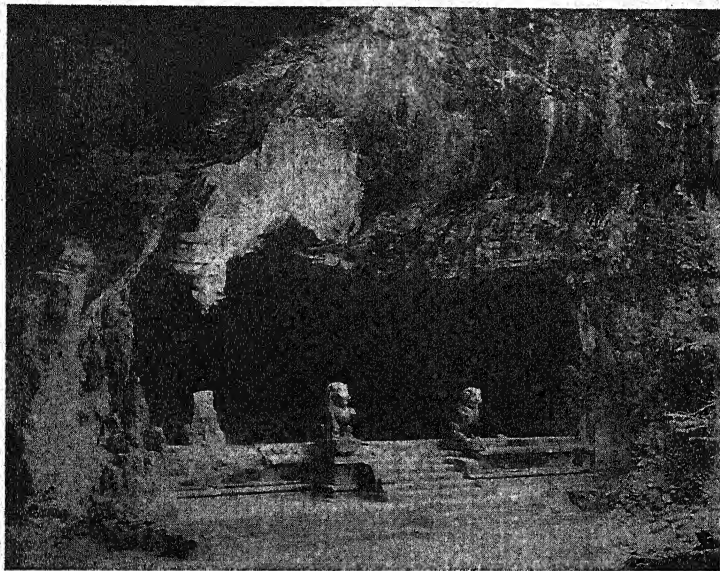
for the will-o-the wisp "influences" continues to fill up many volumes on Indian sculpture. The long braids of curly hair, an everyday experience even now in the interior parts of the country remote from big towns, rendered faithfully in the sculptures of Elephanta suggest for instance, the "wig" to the erudite observers interested in tracing alien "origins" and "influences".

"Gandharvas" and "Apsaras"

The "Gandharvas," "Kinnaras," who form the celestial orchestra, the "Vidyadharas," the male and female dancers and the "Apsaras" the celestial nymphs and dancers, usually depicted at the top in sculptural compositions and as floating over and behind clouds have seldom received the tribute they deserve. The Indian sculptor, like the Indian painter, touches with unfailing reverence and tender feeling the "apsaras" who so often uplift their composition and soften them with romantic imagination. The "apsara" seen on the top left hand corner of the panel of the "Marriage of Siva and Parvati" is eloquent of the manner in which the Indian sculptor moulded and modelled her figure, her soft limbs, her features and the rhythmic sway of movement. How unmistakably the Indian sculptor renders the spirit with which the ancient poet describes these dancing nymphs. Does she not look "like a digit of the moon in the firmament shrouded by fleecy clouds?"

The East Wing

To the east of the main temple hall, along an open courtyard, is seen its adjoining temple wing. It is approached by a flight of steps decorated with a circular platform at the bottom and with a pair of tigers or leogriffs at the top. The temple is raised on a panelled-based platform verandah nearly six feet high. The columns of the temple are similar to those in the main hall. The door of the shrine has, as Burgess says, "a tasteful pattern", a frieze over the capital of their pilasters and crenelated moulding. The big figures by its sides are, apparently, "dwarpalas". But the figure on the right, western side, with four arms, three eyes seems to be one of Siva rather than that of a "dwarpala". It may be, as Erskine conjectured, Bhairava. The difference in the sculpture of the main hall and the sculpture of the figures in this temple is obvious. Although the edge of the robe across the limbs and the relaxed fingers of the arm reclining on the squat figure of the "paisach" indicate the same alternate idea of movement and repose as could be seen in the figure sculptures of the main hall its heavy, unrefined, rigid lines and arrangement is undisguised. The side chapel contains a big figure of Ganesha, the god of all good fortune, with the usual figures flying at the top. Opposite Ganesha is the figure of Siva with the "trisual" or trident. A male figure underneath holds the lotus stalk as



THE EAST WING

The East Wing to the main temple is approached by a flight of steps decorated with a circular platform at the bottom and with a pair of "tigers" or leogriffs at the top. The temple is raised on a panelled-based platform verandah reminiscent of Indian domestic architecture.



EAST WING—"BHAIRAV"

The difference in the sculptures of the main hall and the heavy, unrefined, rigid lines and arrangement of this sculpture is apparent and undisguised.

commonly found in Buddhist sculptures. The wall at the back is decorated with the "saptamatri" sculptures. And, over these figures may be found frieze carved with the "horse-shoe" window motif covered with "kirtimukha", not with the lattice or human heads observable elsewhere. The sunk frieze has some chequer patterns in faint traces of colour. The opposite chapel is plain.

The West Wing

The wing to the west of the main temple hall has a cistern on the south and had once it would seem an entrance on the opposite side, on the north. The shrine on its west side contains sculpture Siva is again shown here as a "yogi" or ascetic, with the lotus seat and stalk upheld by small fat figures, with curly hair. Some of the surrounding figures may be seen holding opening plantains. The sanctuary has the usual linga, the "dwarpalas" and the squat "paisachas". The south side shows Siva with six arms, crowned with a crescent. His right hand holds a cobra and another holds a club. The plantain trees are to be seen here also.

The Second Rock Temple

The temple facade and columns of the second rock temple at Elephanta have disappeared. The sculpture on the door jamb of the shrine chamber is noteworthy, for its leaf moulding and the thick torus.

Over the jambs may be noticed the figures of the animals as brackets, resembling the "yal" common to Dravidian architecture. Over the door is seen the figure of a long "makara." The fragments of two "dwarpala" may be observed by the side of the door.

The Third Rock Temple

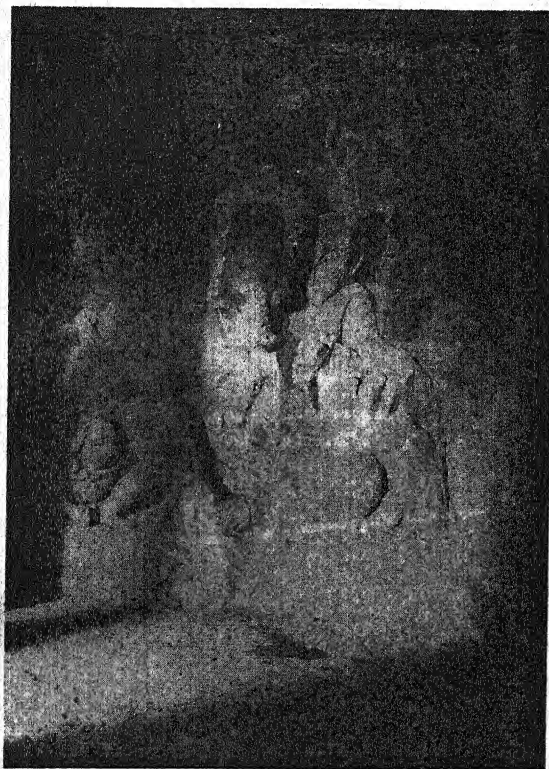
The shrine of the third rock temple is plain. It has, however, the usual "dwarpala" figures, the flying figures, and the "paisachas." There are cells on each side of the shrine. The projecting pilaster and pediments are ornamented with the "horse-shoe" motif.

The Fourth Rock Temple

The door jamb of the shrine of the fourth rock temple is carved with crenellated motif and the pilasters bear a frieze. Particularly noticeable is the semicircular flight of low steps, two inches high, leading to the threshold of the shrine and surrounded with equally noticeable diminutive figures of crouching animals. The "dwarpala" with squat "paisachas" are, as usual, to be found here.

No. 21.

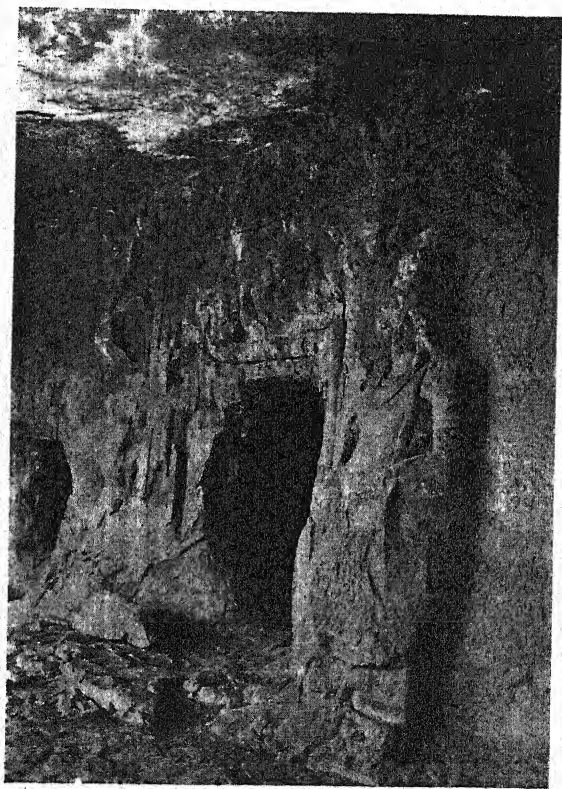
At Elephanta



EAST WING—"GANESHA"

No. 22.

At Elephanta



SECOND ROCK TEMPLE

Over the door jambs may be observed the figures of animals serving as brackets resembling the "Yal" common to Dravidian architecture.

Study of Indian Sculpture

The pamphleteering literature of appreciation that has hitherto served to usurp the attention of the students of Indian art has achieved, naturally, next to nothing to elucidate the artistic values of Indian sculpture. Fortunately, Indian art is beginning to be taken seriously. It is beginning to be recognised that it is no longer enough to expound the oft-repeated maxims of Indian philosophy, to memorise the arithmetic of iconography or to indulge in interminable archaeological speculations about dates, origins and "influences." The academic writers offered all these as easy and "popular" substitutes. But Indian art needs no substitutes. The permanent values of Indian art now demand discriminate, critical, dispassionate examination. They could neither be taken for granted nor left, as they have been, severely alone. Fortunately writers, like M. Ludvig Bachoffer and M. K. de B. Codrington, are endeavouring to clear the soil of the rank growth of sentiment and superlatives that has strangled the free emergence of Indian art, particularly, Indian sculpture. Objective writers, like Vincent Smith, M. Wm. Cohn or Sir John Marshall have, more or less, side tracked Indian sculpture. "For artistic problems Smith cared," observes rightly, M. Bachoffer "but little." And, Sir John furnished only, he adds, a brief resume of the first three centuries of

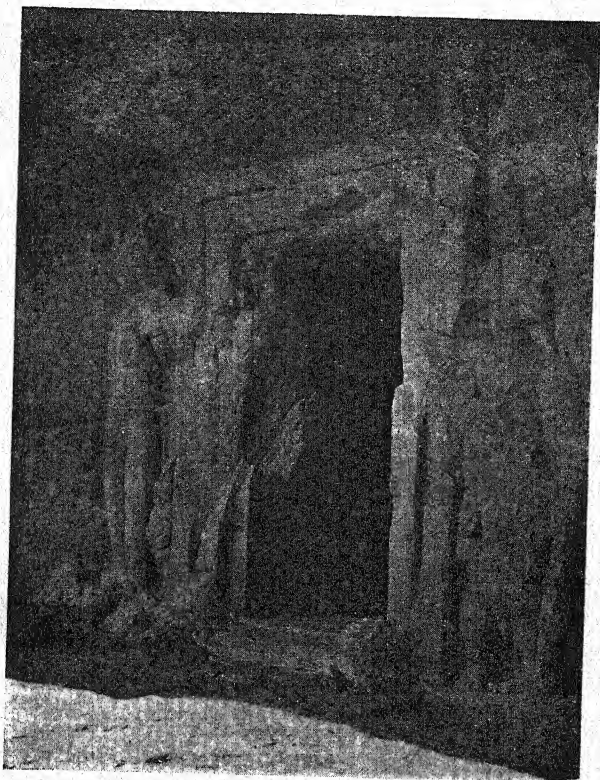
Indian art. Subjective writers, like Havell, Coomarswamy and Stella Kramrisch try to explain the "spiritual suppositions underneath the peculiarity of form." The intention of their exposition is, M. Bachoffer says, "quite laudable, but unfortunately they all fall into the error of trying to interpret works of art only on the basis of expression. They pay little attention to the fact that the forms of expression are subject to considerable fluctuations, and that at various times, in spite of the identity of intentions the same motif was represented in different ways."

Stock Terms, Obscure Art Values

Mr. Codrington's study of the current literature on Indian art has also led him to the healthy precaution. "To apply the fashionable psychological terminology of to-day to an art so little studied as the art of Indian sculpture, would be," he rightly remarks, "to court obscurity." "Misuse of the stock terms of art-criticism has reduced," he adds, "many of them to the verge of meaninglessness." The "theoretical iconography," which obscures most of the volumes of current appreciations of Indian sculpture, "by no means exhausts the rich variety of treatment of the existing sculptures." The general "aesthetic discourse" on Indian sculpture which naively assigns it "schools" have only increased the prevalent obscurity. There are, he concludes, "no 'schools' of Indian sculpture" in any real sense. In Indian sculpture

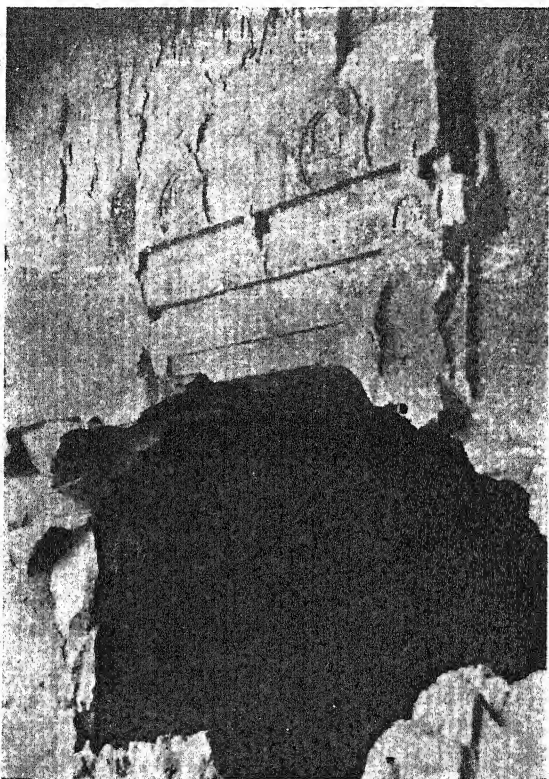
No. 23.

At Elephanta



FOURTH ROCK TEMPLE

Particularly noticeable is the semicircular flight of low steps surrounded by diminutive figures of crouching animals.



THIRD ROCK TEMPLE

The projecting plaster and pediments are ornamented with
"horse-shoe" motif.

geographical distinctions can, he says, seldom be drawn. He admits the radical difference between the post-6th century work of northern and southern India; but it is, he adds, "the result of parallel processes both having their origin in the rock-cut sculpture of the great cave-temples of the Deccan." M. Codrington observes that "two standards offer themselves in dealing with the great series of cave temples of Western India. The first consists of a direct appeal to the accuracy of their imitation of the original wood construction. The second consists in a comparison of their sculpture with the Bharut-Sanchi-Amravati progression of treatment and style In neither case is there a fixed point, chronological or otherwise, to start from." The tendency to "confound contents and style has," adds M. Bachoffer, "caused so much confusion that the necessity of drawing a distinction between the two cannot be sufficiently emphasised in the interests of exact knowledge."

The Importance of Elephanta Sculptures

The prevalent misconceptions and obscurity that surrounds the study of Indian sculpture have, naturally, affected the study and understanding examination of the permanent values of Elephanta sculptures. It is thus essential to realise, first, the variety of the sculptures at Elephanta, secondly, its approximate position in the evolution of significant Indian sculpture and, finally, its enduring and universal art values.

Variety of Sculptures at Elephanta

The sculptured panels may be classified in three different varieties. First, the panels, "Tandava," "Bhairava," "Siva-Parvati Marriage," "Gangavataranna," and "Ardhanarishwar," where the vertical single figures predominate. Secondly, the panels, "Siva-Parvati In Kailas," and "Ravana Under Kailas," where narrative groups are arranged in horizontal compositions. Finally, the panels, "Trimurti," and "Mahayogi," where contemplative repose finds its niche. The "Tandava" and "Bhairava" panels must, moreover, be distinguished from the "Siva-Parvati Marriage," "Gangavataranna," and "Ardhanarishwar" panels. The verticals in the last three panels, employed for the dominating individual figures, are, more or less, static. The verticals in the dominating individual figures of "Tandava," and "Bhairava," are employed for an obviously dynamic aim so effectively that they lose most of their austere severity. They may also be distinguished from the vertical austerity of line of the "Dwarpalas," of the sanctuary.

The Themes of the Sculptures

Let us now observe the variety of the themes of the sculptures. The "Tandava" and the "Bhairava" depict dance movements, the "Siva-Parvati Marriage" and "Siva In Kailas" indicate the tender

charm of what may be described as happy domestic felicity, the "Gangavataram" and the "Ardhanarishwar" explain symbolic incidents in Siva's life, "Ravana Under Kailas" translates in stone a militant episode. The "Trimurti" and the "Mahayogi" are indicative of the reposeful strength of pure contemplation. The comic attitudes of the "Paisachas" squatting by the side of tall, dignified, "Dwarpalas" may be easily noticed. But few, very few, have noticed or cared to notice the reticent humour which finds itself expressed in the panel of the "Siva-Parvati" marriage. One could almost listen to the sly witticisms and tender jokes of the friends and relatives who push forward to the altar the shy bride and the nervous, hesitant, bridegroom. The "Gandharvas" and "Apsaras" and similar minor figures and deities who flutter and float, sing and dance, around and over the dominant figures have not obtained the attention and reverence they deserve.

Place of Elephanta Sculptures

The Elephanta Sculptures mark and express the spiritual impulses and emotions of resurgent Brahmanism. They are, not the only sculptures which mark the period of socio-religious and cultural re-awakening, of the "Mediaeval" period. But they are, probably, the only sculptures of the period, rendered by the artistic genius of the place, unmistakably distinct from the other sculptures of the

period which vary between indecisive experiments and change from Buddhist mannerisms in sculpture to the decadent "tantric" exuberance.

Indian Sculptures and, Asiatic or, "Oriental" Sculpture

Let us first endeavour to understand the distinction of Indian sculptures from those sculptures that have been with exasperating vagueness of the sentimental literatures and antiquarians described as "Oriental" or "Asiatic". To a student of sculpture, the distinction would be easily noticeable, the distinction which the Indian sculptor's feeling and sense for volume, for cubic contents, acquire for Indian sculpture and secure for its exceptional artistic values. This sense or feeling for volume may be considered to be practically absent in the surface sculptures of, say, Egypt or Asia-Minor.

What are the characteristics which distinguish the sculptures at Elephanta from the Indian sculptures of other periods and places? Students of Indian sculpture know how from Bharut, Sanchi, Amravati to Karli the Indian sculptor gradually builds up a co-ordinated and definable style which, ultimately, is reduced to license and decaying uniformity. The process is a common feature in the historic evolution of Indian sculpture. It could be noticed in the sculptures of the period to which the Elephanta sculptures

belong. But the sculptures at Elephanta have remained singularly detached from license and decay.

The sculptures of the earliest times, as those of Bharut, reveal simple statements of observed truths and daily environment of life. The sculptures at Sanchi suggest more definitely conscious power of the sculptor who has, naturally, grown more ambitious as well. At Amravati, where the cycle of Indian sculptural evolution reaches its decadent phase, the freedom instinctive, unsophisticated, wholesome joy of life which one found in the Mathura sculptures, deteriorates into a restless license and the ennui peculiar to the sculptors who portray the fashions, foibles and artificial elegance of court life and aristocratic atmosphere. The royal pairs carved at Karli point to the other phase where the technical efficiency of the sculptor and his free power are deliberately subordinated to and effectively employed for art rendered easily significant by the human touch, clear and confident. But the human figure which received continued attention and organic growth at Sanchi, Karli, Mathura and Amravati is indicative of a phase in the evolution of Indian sculpture altogether distinct from the sculptures which could be seen, for example, at Ajanta, Elephanta or Ellora, distinct not so obviously from the point of view of the carver's skill as from the range of the aim and scale which directed it towards different artistic problems.

The Mind of Man

Art was not representative merely of the body and beliefs of Man. It dared to interpret the mind of man, the mind that speculates, explores, aspires as well as understands and believes, the mind that challenges facts and creates new conditions and new values not less than it accepts old facts and faiths. Consequently, the range of its aim changes the scale of its compositions and the character of its artistic problems. The exuberant variety of the sculptures, say, at Ajanta and Ellora could not possibly be appropriately indicative, however, of the unity of artistic purpose and achievements, suggestive of the Indian sculptor's range of aim, scale and achievements, as the sculptures found in the hall of the main temple at Elephanta.

The Human Body

The sculptures at Elephanta are not, by any chance, an abrupt manifestation. They are a logical outcome of the inherent artistic instincts, gifts and experiences of the people. They have almost every artistic trait that has served to develop and advance the growth of sculpture in India. The "unsurpassed capacity of mediaeval art to make perceptible through the human figure the most sublime and complicated ideas of Mahayana and Hinduism—all that would have been," justly points out M. Ludwig

Bachoffer, "impossible had not sculptors during the centuries immediately preceding and following the birth of Christ taken such endless pains over the problems of how to reproduce the human body and finally found the solution in the close imitation of nature. We must also add that from the very beginning early Indian plastic art never imagined man as something separate and isolated from Nature, the Hindus have placed the human body surrounded by rich architecture or landscape. After many endeavours these elements have been grouped in the sense of spacial effect. This means the stress is always laid upon the body which is filling the space, but never upon the space itself."

The "endless pains" of the Indian sculptor to "reproduce the human body" his "many endeavours" to group "in the sense of spacial effect" have been left all but unperceived by those who could not see, as M. Codrington sees that, "the richness of Indian sculpture lies wholly in the work. Even in its erotic passages it is the least suggestive art in the world."

Material, Silhouette and Modelling

Further, they could not notice, as M. Codrington notices, that the Indian sculptor has been "faithful to the material". The "line of the silhouette is not stressed and modelling, in the sense of reproduction of the planes of muscle and limb, is rejected almost entirely. Here perhaps is the unique quality of Indian

sculpture. The broadly conceived planes of such a figure as the Ilyssos, especially the powerful flat treatment of the thighs, is the antithesis of the treatment of mass in Indian sculpture just as the bulgy articulation of the musculature of most Italian sculpture is the antithesis of its insistence on simplification. Since the nature of the matrix is never disguised, the form imposed upon it is always well founded. These figures, however extravagant the postures may be, always stand. The design springs from below like a growing thing. The treatment of limbs is curvilinear but austere; so, the straight lines of the lower part of the body and the arms being used to develop the swelling hips and breasts. Arms and hands are vividly treated, the drawing of the gesture, however perfect, never degenerating into a dominant silhouette.

The Sense of Movement, not Linear

The sense of movement is never linear in origin but always in three dimensions—It is obvious that such an art is based upon a special sense of form. It has been said that form and material are very closely linked in Indian sculpture. It is equally true that the sculptor is never wholly occupied with superficial form. As has been said, the finished work is always well founded like the rock itself which contained it in all its parts before the chisel touched it. It might be fancied that an art based upon the manipulation of superficial form is comparable with a

philosophy based upon the manipulation of syllogistic logic. It is in a sense, linear, full of sequent points. An art that adheres as closely to material as Indian sculpture does, is not linear in any sense but truly massive."

Drapery and Ornaments

The constant and often minute attention which the Indian sculptor offered to the carving of drapery and ornaments, enriching and relieving the body or accentuating and indicative of its movement and rhythm could be noticed by the most superficial student of India sculptures. And, yet few have gone beyond the superficial observation of the minute carving of ornament and drapery to notice and examine their sculptural logic. These traits, the feeling for volume the fidelity to material, the "massive" conception and the relation of drapery and ornament for the articulate outline are a feature, naturally, common to the sculptures, more or less, contemporary at, say, Ajanta, Ellora, or Badami. They indicate the weaknesses as well as the strong traits of Indian sculpture.

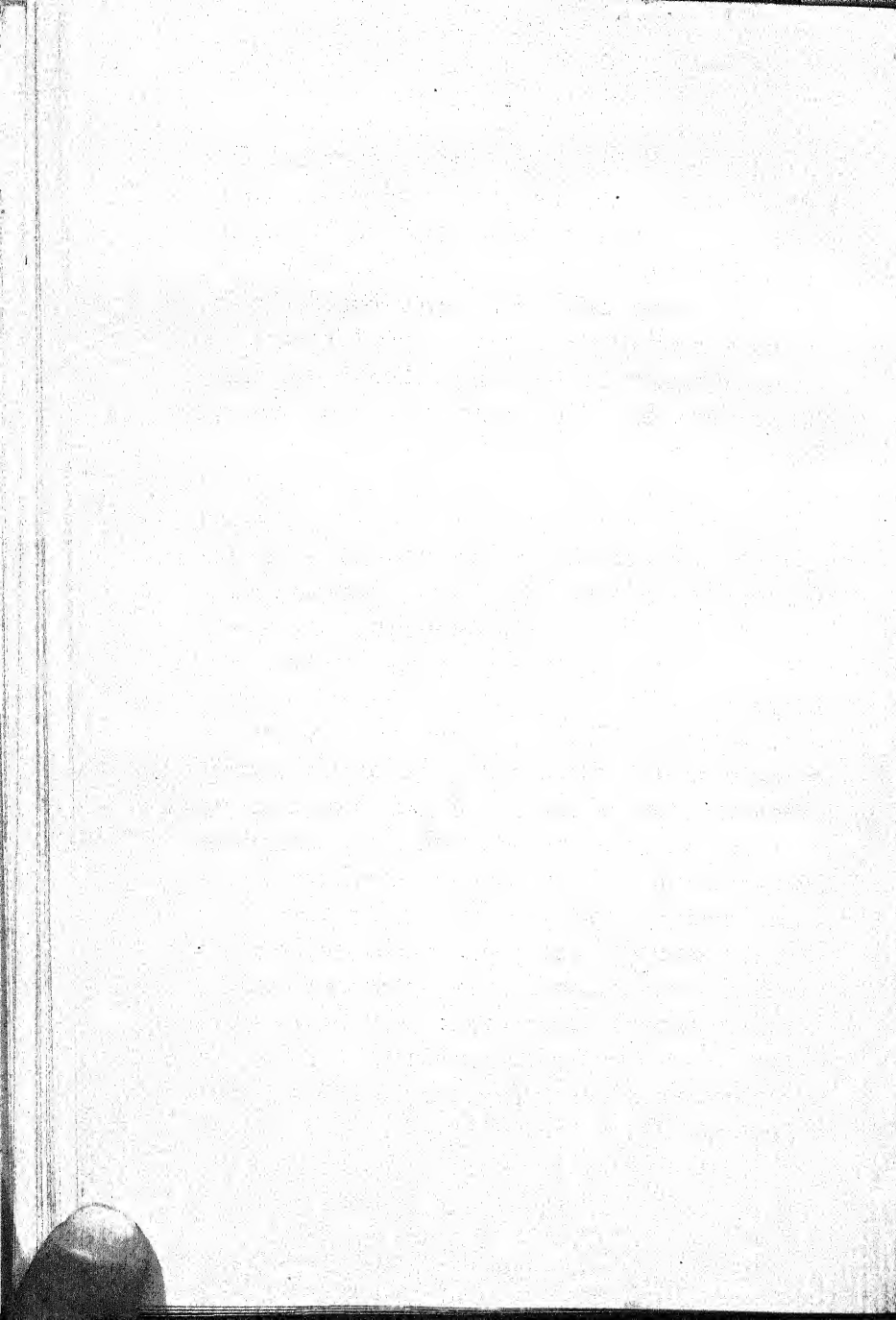
Local Art Achievement

What distinguishes the sculptures at Elephanta is the decided local traits of sculptural advancement. Like the sculptures at Sanchi, the sculptures at Elephanta more than merely record contemporary achievements. They do not merely belong to the period. They push the period definitely by local,

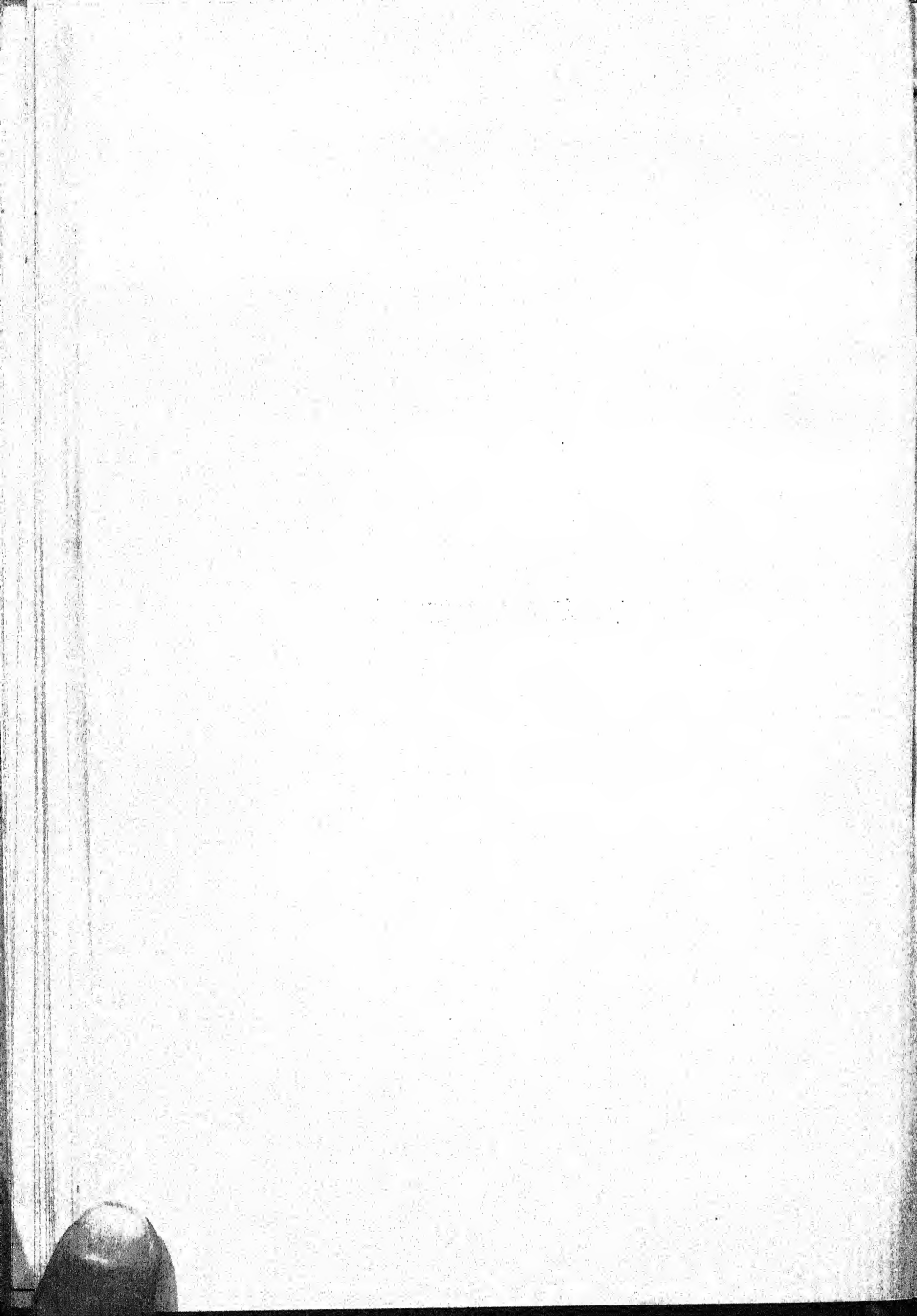
unmistakable, artistic advancement. The intellectual vigour of resurgent Brahmanism which finds diffused expression in the scattered exuberance of the sculptures, say, at Ellora or at Badami, finds purposive direction and control from the sculptors who carved and fashioned the hall of the main temple at Elephanta. The sculptures reveal artistic unity, not the ingenious but uneven display of technical craftsmanship, not the uniformity of iconographic formulas. The unity of decisive design, the iconographic conciseness, the architectural austerity thus distinguish the sculptures at Elephanta. They do not subordinate architecture. They supplement architecture and render it significant. These are artistic traits rare, if not altogether unique, in Indian sculptures.

The inter-relation of Indian architecture and sculptures has been the pet commonplace of writers on Indian art. But the inter-relation has not received the analytical examination it deserves and demands. Nor is the inter-relation utilised to elucidate the qualities or character of either architecture or sculpture. The main temple at Elephanta has achieved its artistic unity and significance by an organic combination, of rare perfection, of architectural and sculptural values. Consequently, it claims but it has not received the attention from students and exponents of Indian art they should have offered for a theme of such obviously unusual importance. In 1579 John Huighen Van Linschoten,

in his "Discours of Voyages into ye Easte and West Indies" wrote as follows:— "There is yet another Pagode which they hold and esteem for the highest and chiefest pagode of all the rest, which standeth in a little island called Pory; this Pagode by the Portingals is called the Pagode of the Elephant. In that Island standeth an high hill, and on the top thereof there is a hole, that goeth down into the hill, digged and carved out of the hard rock or stones as big as a great cloyster; within it hath both places and cisterns for water very curiously made, and round about the walls are cut out and formed the shapes of Elephants, Lions, Tigers, and a thousand other such-like wild and cruel beasts; also some Amazons—which are so well and workmanlike cut, that it is strange to behold". In 1783, Hector MacNeil wrote:—"It is difficult to write with any degree of temper on the dismal mutilations of this princely cavern, the stone of which is of such durable nature as to have in great measure baffled the ravages of time—and had it not been for the ingenuity of human madness, the caves of Elephanta would at this hour have been not only a valuable key to many inexplicable appearances in the other caves, but a noble monument of ancient architecture and sculpture.—" The "noble monument" has not yet been seen much less interpreted in terms of architecture or sculpture.



(ii)
ARCHITECTURE



"—We, in fact, look at the building, not at any labels that may have affixed to it here and there."

"If the study of architecture is to become a general humanizing influence, if it is to teach us as much as possible about ourselves and our kind, then we must raise it above the level of crockets and tracery, or mouldings and capitals and such like. Architecture is the whole that is greater than the parts, greater even than the sum of these parts; it is the living thing that is greater than the dead, possibly for no particular reason except that it happens to be whole and to be alive."

—Christian Barman.

Probably, it will be long before the requisite architectural outlook and insight will enable the academic writers to understand the apparent perplexities of the "yogi" sculptures on the verandahs of, say, Elephanta, Jogeshwari, or Mandapeshwar, the architectural significance of the "dwarpala" sculptures or of the architectural logic of such decorative motifs as the "kirtimukhas." But one should begin, at least, to examine and define, approximately, the unmistakable traits of architectural importance and significance. The task is not easy. For, our appreciation of Indian architecture has not gone farther than the encyclopedic information of such

writers as Fergusson and Burgess or the sentimental dogmatism of the antiquarians who succeeded them. "The principal architectural features of this and nearly all other cave temples is" observed Burgess, "the pillars." Almost the only other "architectural features" observed by Burgess are "the door jambs and the bases under the front and sides of the main cave and its adjuncts and under some of the sculptured compartments. These latter are of one pattern,—"

Over half a century has elapsed since the time when these statements were first pronounced. Revolutionary changes have occurred, during the interval, in the fundamental outlook, conception, value and significance of architecture. But the progressive thought remains, to this moment, almost entirely unnoticed by those who have been devoting their lavish sentiment and superlatives for the "revival" of Indian art. The romantic "revival" has continued for nearly three decades. But the self-complacency of the "revived" interest is complete. It has been impervious to progressive thought, reason and knowledge. The romantic antiquarians have continued to flutter around and elaborate the architectural views and verdicts first pronounced by Fergusson and Burgess. Almost all the current descriptions of Cave-temple architecture evoked by the romantic antiquarians bear unmistakable traces of the now obsolete outlook and restricted conception of archi-

tectural values and significant design derived from them.

Architecture in Parts

They still restrict architecture to its parts. They have not gone beyond the level of "crockets and tracery, or mouldings and capitals and such like." They cannot think of architecture as "the whole greater than the parts." Consequently, they believe, what Burgess believed, that the "principal architectural feature" of Elephanta and "nearly all other cave temples is the pillars." Fergusson, one of the most scholarly, well-reasoned, sound investigators, found that "while most of the details in the rock excavations of this country are mere repetitions in stone of the wooden forms prevalent in the civil architecture of the age when they were first cut, the pillars are an exception to this rule, and 'seem never to have been of wood.'"

Antiquarian Speculations

It was more than sufficient for the speculative necessities of the antiquarians. The value, the importance, and the significance of the "civil architecture" have been left unexamined and almost every antiquarian exponent of Indian architecture continues to compose long-winded platitudes about the "wooden" repetitions and "origin" of the cave temples. When they exhaust their speculations about

the "origins" of "motifs" and "forms," they begin to enumerate the details about "door jambs," "basis," "sculptured compartments" pillars and "adjuncts." The conception of architecture as "the whole greater than the parts" has remained foreign to them. The architectural logic which really determined the common features of the cave temples and the "civil architecture of the age" has not been explained. Indian architecture, like Indian sculpture, has been subjected to interminable disquisitions of the "parts" and their "origins." For example the reference, by Burgess, to the uniform bases under the sculptured compartments at Elephanta, obviously an architectural feature, has not been followed by any mention of its importance and necessity for the continuity of architectural design. If architectural history in Europe has, as Christian Barman aptly observes, "suffered greater distortion than any other history from the imposition of the Ancient-Mediaeval-Modern scheme, which the German historian Spengler calls 'incredibly jejune and meaningless,'" architectural history in India has not yet begun to be even thought of in terms of architecture. The design, for example, of Michelozzo's Medicean palace, in Florence, has been studied, as he says, with "an entirely new regard for the place taken by these members in the dynamic scheme." The design of the cornice of the palace and of the enriched bands dividing each story from the next is recognised as

revealing "for the first time a formal contact, a continuity of design." It was not established easily or immediately or by untrained eyes or prentice hands. "A new and sharper apprehension of visual forms was," points out Christian Barman, "needed before these stretches of building could be brought under the authority of design, could be made into a continuously legible thing.

"Silversmith's Style"

The artists of the fifteenth century Italy were fortunate in possessing a more highly trained vision than those of other countries. This they had attained chiefly while working at sculpture in semi-precious metals and in marble on a scale which gave to the work the importance of a national industry.—The majority of the most distinguished architects of the time began life as sculptors or gold or silversmiths; afterwards the Spaniards called the new architectural style the 'silversmith's style'.

The general pre-occupation with small works of sculpture in costly materials certainly did a great deal to kindle a new and immense enthusiasm for formal perfection. It did still more to educate it. In this search after exquisite form, architecture was constantly present to the mind." The architectural designs of ancient Indian monuments have not been, surely, studied with the same reverent vision and under-

standing manifest in the appreciation of the Florentine palace. We have our own class of observers who have, like the old Spaniards, seen in Indian architecture little except the "silversmith's style." And, as both Indian architecture and sculpture happen to be almost the sole concern of the sentimental "revivalists" or of the romantic routine of the antiquarians, Burgess' verdict that "the principal architectural feature" of Elephanta and "nearly all other cave temples is the pillars" remains, after decades of "revived" interest in Indian art, unaltered. Consequently, no attempt is made to distinguish the architecture of, say, the cave temples at Ellora, at Elephanta or at Jogeshwari. They have been spoken of in the lump, in the manner first initiated by writers like Burgess. They have been classified as "mediaeval"—"Brahmanic". Consequently, they have been subjected to the dominant antiquarian occupation or, shall we say, ache for interminable debates about "origins." Almost the entire importance and significance of these "Brahmanical" temples appear to them to consist in the manner they indicate and the extent to which they have been "derived" from Buddhist cave temples.

"Derived" Origins

The difference between one "Brahmanic" temple and another is if the antiquarians were to be believed,

almost invariably, the difference in their dates. So that, their architectural appreciations terminate with the speculations about "origins," with the set commonplace about "wooden forms" in cave temples, with the "Brahmanic" temples "derived" from Buddhist temples and, finally, with the assignment of dates. Art criticism or appreciation is not traceable even in the remote background. It is, practically, non-existent. We shall, therefore, "look at the building," as Christian Barman observes, "not at any labels that may have been affixed to it here and there" by the romantic antiquarians.

The Complete Picture

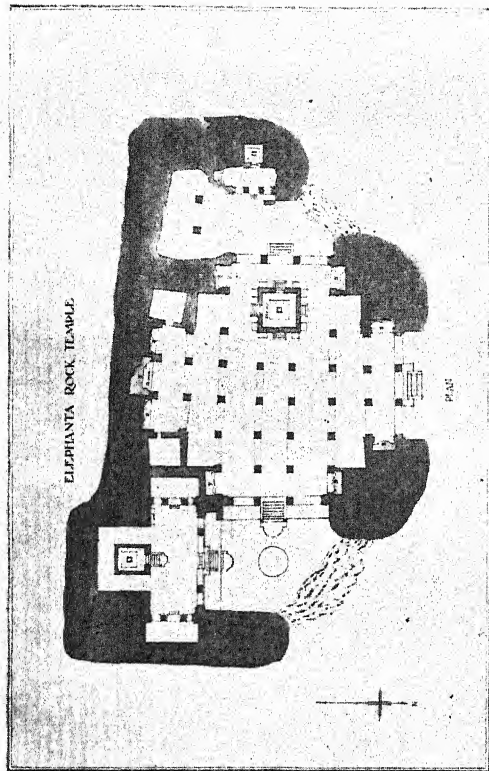
If we stand in the centre of the open courtyard, on the north, which, I believe, was, originally, the main entrance to the temple, we shall immediately grasp the beauty of its architectural design. The centre has been already marked out by the circular motif raised a few inches from the floor of the courtyard. It has been conjectured, rightly I believe, that the motif was originally the base of the pedestal on which the carved representation of "Nandi", the indispensable adjunct to every Siva temple, stood. Looking towards the hall from this point of view, both the architectural skill of the designer and his ultimate aim become more than apparent. For, it is from this point of view that the avenue of imposing

columns leads the eye straight to the altar of the Siva-linga, the main object of worship in the central shrine silhouetted, sharply and effectively, against the brilliant light from the courtyard on the west, opposite the spectator, behind the altar. There is nothing to distract the attention of the onlooker. The picture is complete. The cool, deep, shadows of the verandah and the hall invite him inside. And, the colonnade form the avenue down which the worshipper slowly approaches the shrine guarded by the dignified austerity of the "dwarpalas". The architect thus directs and assists the worshipper. The plan, the architectural forms and design, the colonnades and austere dignity of the carved "dwarpalas" the ceiling near the shrine freed of the architraves joining the columns as well as the severe simplicity of the shrine walls are, deliberately, purposive. It is, if one may so describe it, "functional" architecture. The architect's design was, of set purpose, fashioned for the education and the ultimate fulfilment of the spiritual aspirations of the worshipper. If the cave temple architect changed the position of the shrine, as he did, at Jogeshwari or, say, at Mandapeshwar it was, obviously, for other reasons than those realised, enumerated and elaborated by the antiquarians. If the shrine at Elephanta is not in the centre of the main hall and if it is so at Jogeshwari the difference in the position is, certainly, not due to dates or to the "derived" proximity or



COLONNADE AROUND THE MAIN SHRINE

The ceiling near the shrine freed of the architraves joining the columns as well as the severe simplicity of the shrine walls mark the "functional" character of the architecture.



MAIN TEMPLE PLAN

Neither the regional nor the "functional" aspects of architectural evolution have received the study and attention they deserve from exponents of Indian art. The plan of the main temple is, of set purpose, different from the plans of its subsidiary temples.

remoteness of the temples from the Buddhist cave temples.

Functional Architecture

The change or the difference was both dictated and decided by the requirements of the place and the "functional" aim of the architect. As architectural appreciation has not yet emancipated itself from antiquarian speculations, the cave temples have been left unjudged in terms of architecture. Neither the regional nor the "functional" aspects of architectural evolution have, as I pointed out in my book "At Ajanta", received the studied attention they ought to have obtained from the exponents of Indian art. Even a discriminate observer like Mr. K. de B. Codrington has been led to assert that Indian architecture and sculpture may be assigned the primary division into "northern and southern styles," and that "it is, perhaps, surprising that as a whole the work should be so lacking in local variety." Like most of the exponents of Indian art, Mr. Codrington has, evidently, found contentment with an inadequate definition of the place the art-monuments of Western India occupy in the evolution of Indian art. I have already shown how the distinction of the sculptures at Elephanta is not less local than contemporary. Similarly, the architectural distinction of the cave temples at Elephanta, Jogeshwari, Mandapeshwar or

Kanheri is not less local than contemporary. And, the temples indicate, quite clearly, different stages of architectural experiments and evolution, not merely mechanical "style" or mere "variety."

Social Continuity in Architecture

Here, at Elephanta, as at no other cave temple, perhaps, could be seen, definitely and clearly, not only the struggle between northern and southern architectural forms but a decisive rejection of non-essentials and the emergence of the tangible triumph of significant design as well. Architecture was not, as Christian Barman aptly expresses it, "a backward-looking thing like its name — The subservience of architecture to social continuity is one of those truths that we are apt to overlook just because they are so obvious." The subservience to social needs could not possibly be observed by the antiquarian pundits who see only religious "ideals" preconceived by them subsequent to the literal rendering of the craftsman's old manual and codes. But the fragments of architectural motifs scattered outside the main temple at Elephanta, in cave temples II, III, IV, illustrate not only the common origin out of common socio-religious needs and aspirations, the architectural logic of both Hindu and Buddhist cave temples, they indicate as well the manner in which, out of the rejection of non-essentials seen scattered in the various experiments

in caves II, III, IV, arose the architectural triumph and emancipation of significant design in the fashioning of the main temple. The difference is not less obvious in architecture than in sculpture. Compare the plans of caves II, III, IV, at Elephanta with the plans of some the "Vihar" cave temple plans at, say, Ajanta. Compare the facade of cave VII at Ajanta and of Cave III at Elephanta, notice the common "horse-shoe" motif and the similarity of columns, compare the "yal" brackets on the door jamb of Cave IV at Ajanta and similar motifs on the door jambs of caves II and III at Elephanta, compare the lions at the basis of the door jambs and verandah of the subsidiary caves at Elephanta and Jogeshwari, observe the "makara" figures on top of the doors and they would suggest not only the similarity and common architectural origin of the Buddhist and Hindu temples but would indicate as well how scattered experiments with northern architectural trends and southern plastic motifs and an immature architectural competence lead, ultimately, towards significant design.

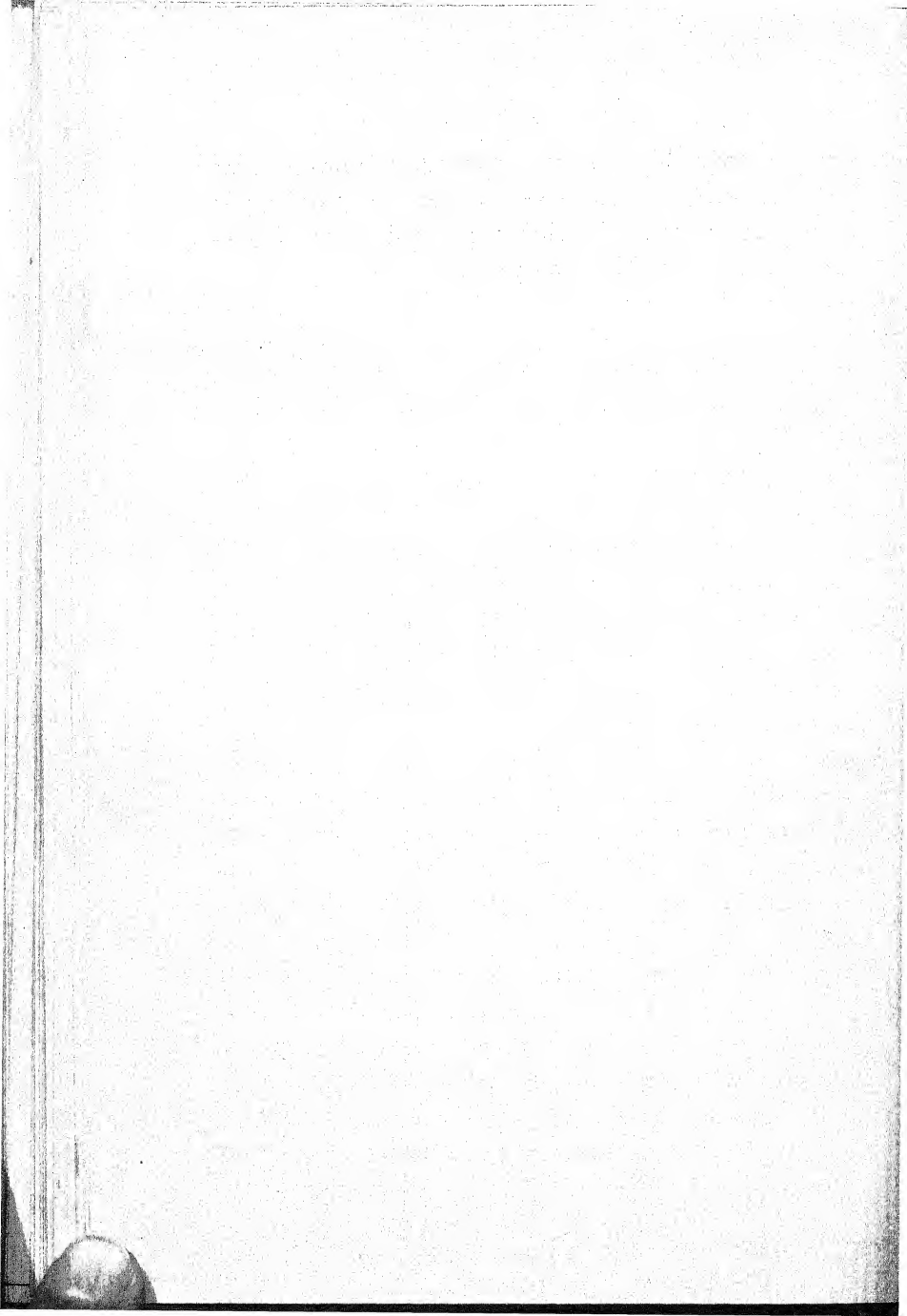
Temple Plans

The plan of the main temple is different from its subsidiary temples the "horse-shoe" motif cannot be traced the "makara" is inconspicuous, the "yal" brackets on the door jambs are imperceptible and

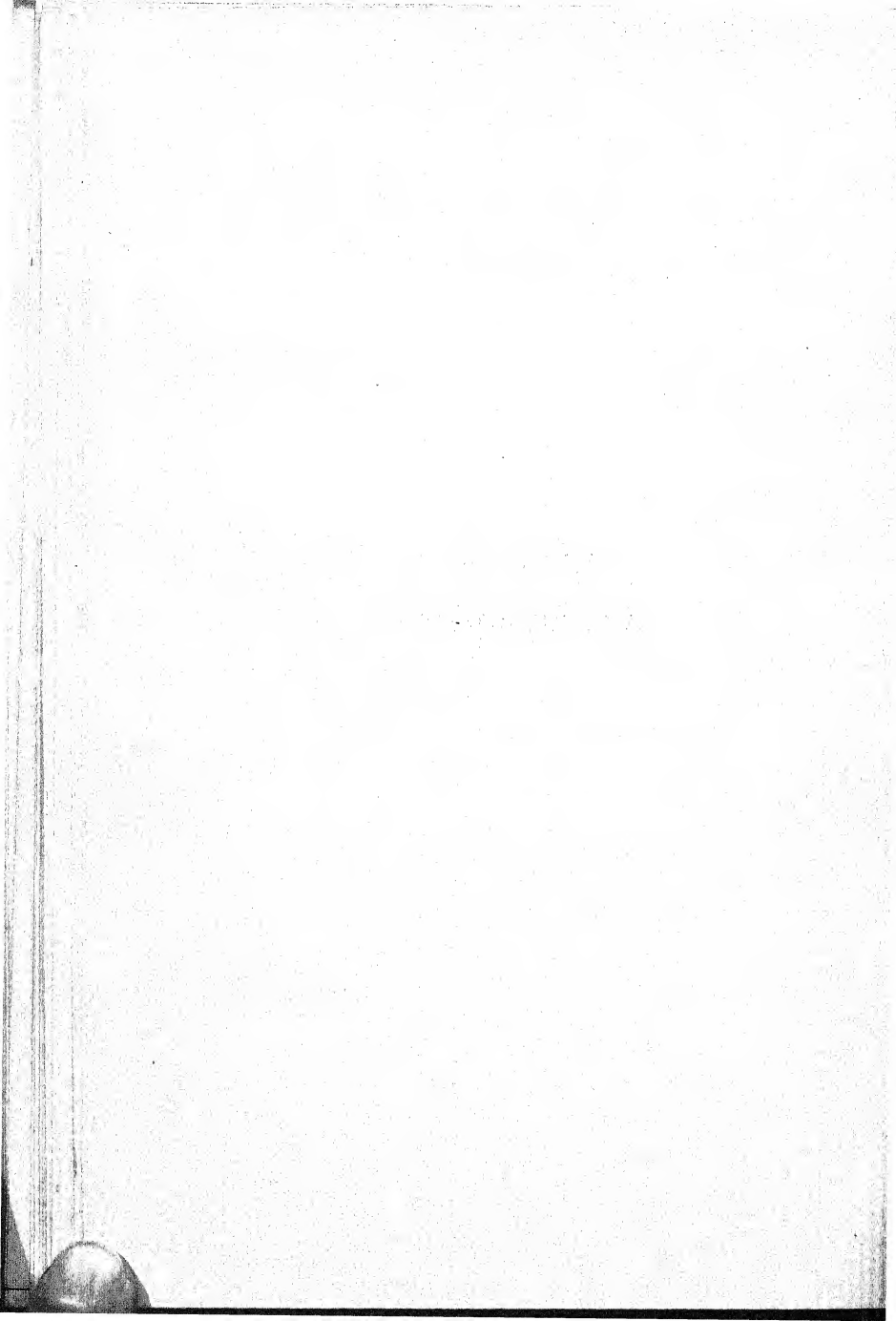
the lions or leogriffs decorate only the verandah and door jambs outside the main temple—the elephants take its place.

The first preliminaries of the “cushion” columns dominantly projected at Elephanta may be first observed in its subsidiary cave II. Consequently, the architects of Elephanta did not regard, as our antiquarians regarded, architecture as “a backward-looking thing.” It was not merely “derived”, nor did it mechanically reproduce the architecture or sculpture of past or contemporary Buddhist temples. There was a deliberate effort in architecture as well as in sculpture, towards the rejection of non-essentials, towards the evolution of new forms and art values. If the influence of the plastic motifs and of the modelling technique of figure casting in copper, so common in the south, and observable in the subsidiary caves at Elephanta could be seen definitely rejected in the dominant sculptures of Elephanta, the architectural superfluities of the subsidiary caves as well as their plan have also been with equally determined purpose dropped out of the main temple. And, as we stand in the centre of its eastern courtyard marked by the pedestal ring of the now absent “nandi” statue and look towards the sharply focussed and silhouetted “linga” altar, we visualise a picture of live design and enduring graphic values. The architect of the temple positively assists and directs the worshipper. The cool, deep, shadows of the verandah and hall of the

temple invite him inside. And, the colonnade form the imposing avenue down which the worshipper slowly approaches the shrine guarded by the dignified austerity of the "dwarpalas."

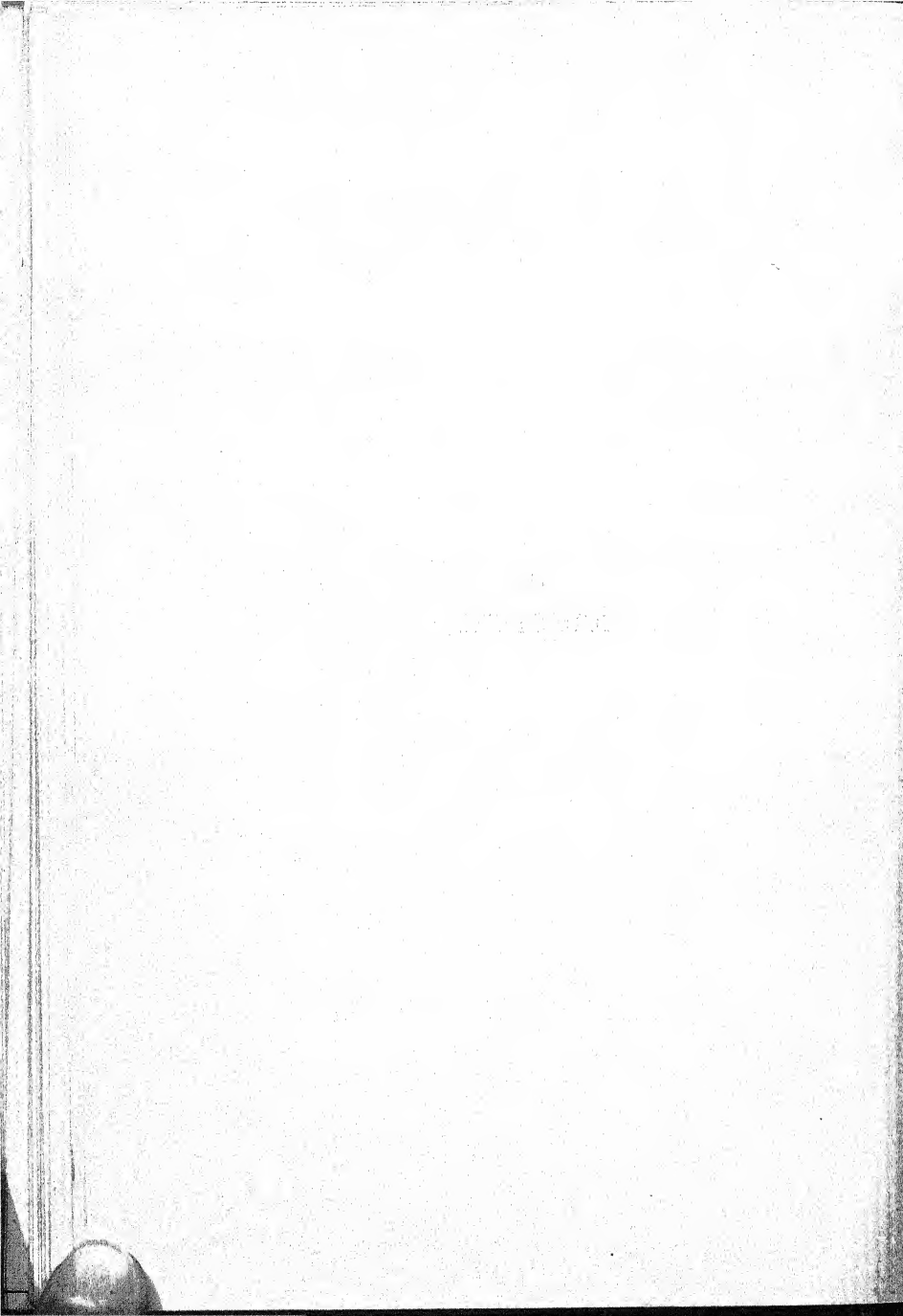


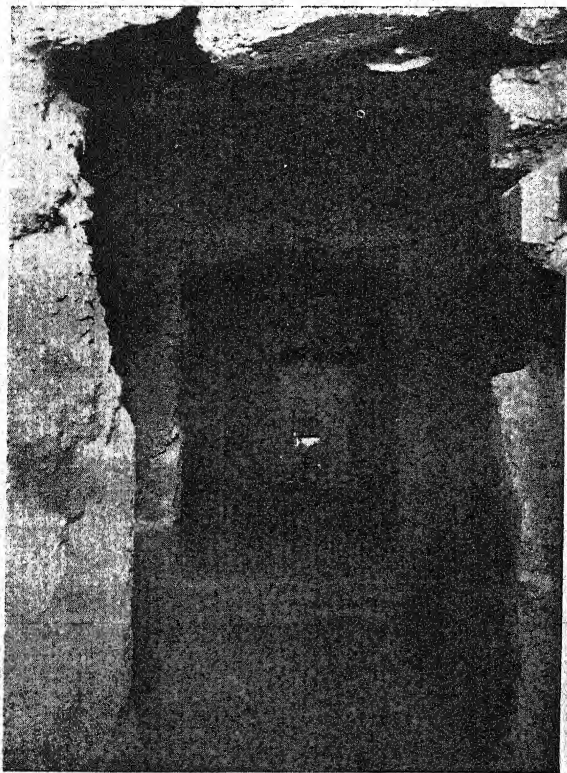
PART III
AT JOGESHWARI



(i)

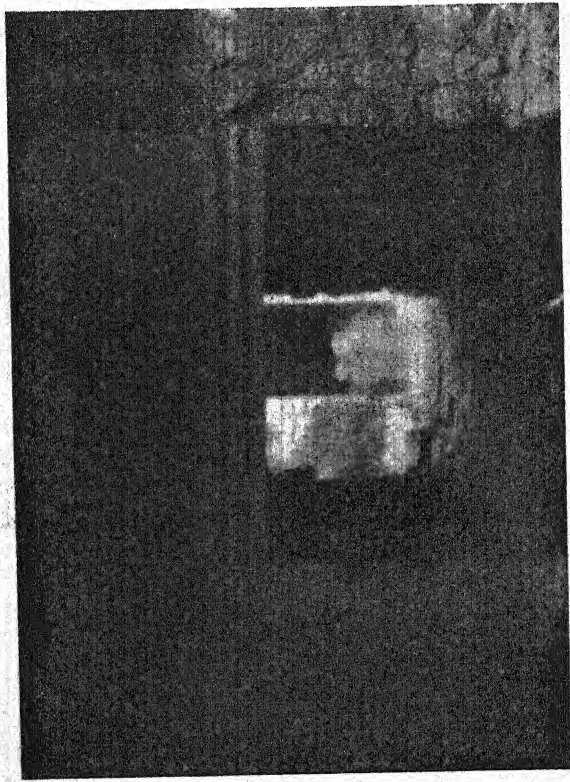
SCULPTURE





THE CENTRAL SANCTUARY

The altar of the "linga" symbol in the main shrine of the central hall is as sharply and effectively silhouetted as the altar and the symbol at Elephanta. Compare this picture with the similar picture from Elephanta on the Frontispiece. The camera interprets dispassionately the artistic pre-occupation of the ancient architect.



FIRST EAST COURT — "RAVANA UNDER KAILAS"

The neat door with fluted pilasters, "sardul" brackets and the bas-relief of "Ravana under Kailas" crowned by a bow-like arch or "torana" terminating with "Makara" motifs. The animated vivacity, despite the faded figures of the composition, is easily recognised.

The visitor to the Jogeshwari cave-temples, tourist, student or exponent of Indian art, architecture, or sculpture would miss much if he misses the picture visualised from the passage of approach on the west, which is the present entrance, or from the passage on the east, which was the original approach to the cave-temple. He should, consequently, walk slowly down the system of courts, corridors and courtyards along the passages to note the varied beauty which the ancient Indian master-builders, art-craftsmen, architects and sculptors fashioned and conjured up in this temple. He would observe the gentle, persuasive, but none the less direct and effective way in which he finds himself invited and led to approach the temple.

Graphic Realities

Unlike Elephanta in its rock structure, the temples at Jogeshwari leave no scope for the system of colonnades with which its architect could lead the worshipper to the main shrine and object of worship. Nevertheless, he succeeds marvellously. Down the narrow passage, along the corridors and across the open courtyards deep, intense, cool shadows alternate with light in a vital scheme of composition which leads the visitor or rather the worshipper's eye, straight to the altar of the "linga" symbol in the main shrine of the central hall sharply and effectively silhouetted;

as the altar and the symbol at Elephanta. Let the eyes of those who speak and discuss, in the abstract, about uniformly "copied" or derived architecture of the cave-temples function. Let them see the pictures designed and conjured up by the ancient architect, tangibly. Let them compare the pictures. The camera interprets dispassionately. The artistic pre-occupation of the ancient architect would be more than obvious. The artistic achievement of the architect who, despite the limitations involved in the difference, say, of locality, or of the structures of the rock, could with the aid of a changed plan and arrangement of the scheme of "decoration" re-create graphic realities, equally and obviously indisputable and vivid.

"Dull and Undignified!"

Fifty years ago when Fergusson and Burgess examined and described the cave temples of India, they were, naturally, handicapped with all the limitations of the pioneers. General interest in art, archaeology, architecture was all but imperceptible, archaeological excavations and discoveries were yet outside any stabilised system or control. Despite the awakened interest in art, archaeology and architecture, during the intervening period, it is, however, not seldom to find to-day the most random and even reckless statements made in regard to the artistic heritage which survives in the cave temples of India,

particularly of western India. As late as in July 1928 the following statement by one of the well-known Indian archæologists was published in a leading Indian journal. In the Jogeshwari cave-temple we see he says, "the medieval temple shorn of all its dignity and a mere copy of a stone-built temple with a *Mandapa* and *Ardha-Mandapas*. There are no bas-reliefs, no ornamentations and no attempt to relieve the dull monotony of the exteriors of the medieval shrines..... In such temples exterior ornamentation are possible only on the façade but in this cave the triple-storied façade is dull and undecorated." Fifty years ago Burgess found the Jogeshwari cave temples "so much more like the more modern structural temples." He could then observe "sardula brackets," "a bas-relief under an arch over the lintel," "walls which have been covered with sculptures," the central door of the main hall having "sculptures on each side of it." But three decades of pre-conceived theories and antiquarian sentiment have rendered the advancement of systematic, dispassionate, investigation superfluous. So that what has been and could be observed could also be overlooked. The numerous sculptures at Jogeshwari could be assumed to be non-existent! The sweeping generalisation about what is "possible" in "exterior ornamentation" may be overlooked, not so the observations of Burgess already on authentic record for the last fifty years. The sculptures in Jogeshwari cave temples are not only an interesting

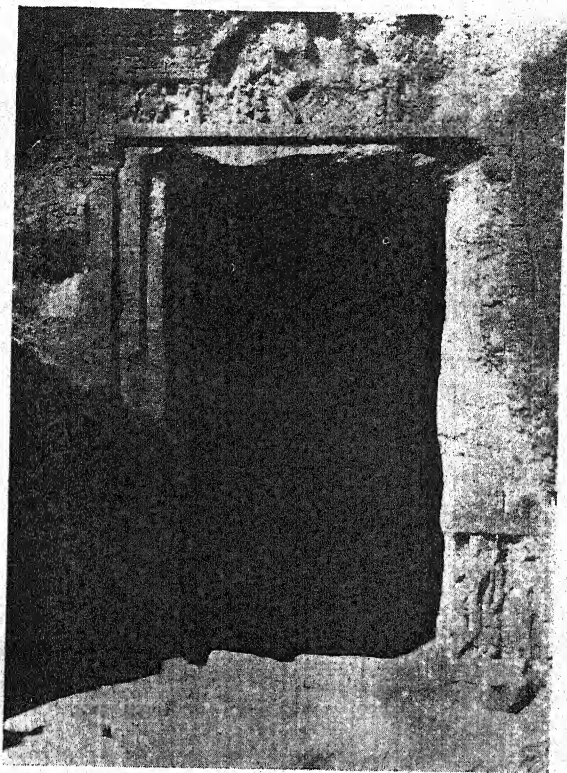
document they are instructive as well, both to the students of architecture as well as to the students of Indian sculpture. Not only is the existence of "exterior ornamentation," "bas-reliefs," and sculptures obviously indisputable their place and value in a well-defined scheme is equally indisputable.

Sculptures Change Position

As we enter the main approach to the cave on the east down the descending flight of steps we proceed along a series of courts and corridors decorated with sculptures descriptive of the themes usually associated with Siva worship. Only, the nature and position of the rock and the technical difficulties of his craft led the carver to change the usual position of the sculptures. Instead of carving his important Siva themes on the side walls, as usual in other cave temples, he placed them, rightly, over the door jambs.

"Ravana Under Kailas"

We thus discover in the first court on the east over "the neat doorway with fluted pilasters having sardul brackets" the bas-relief of "Ravana Under Kailas" crowned by a bow-like arch or "toranna" terminated with "makara" motifs. Looking up towards the ceiling of the court we find a carved medallion. The sculptures have been disfigured and have almost faded away. But there is enough of the bas-relief over the lintel of the door to suggest the



THE "TANDAVA" DANCE

Only fragments of the original dancing figure of Siva, carved over the door, are now perceptible. But the sculptor's unfettered art and vision could be traced even now by the outlines of patterned rhythm. The sculptor's architectural pre-occupation may be seen in the pavillions decorated with the "cushioned" columns predominant at Elephanta.

No. 30.

At Jogeshwari



EAST VESTIBULE—MARRIAGE OF SIVA-PARVATI

Over the door we see a carved frieze, covering the whole length of the wall, of unusual interest. Over the top of the doorway underneath, the "toranna" arch with "makara" ends and "kirtimukha" keystone is seen Siva with a massive staff. On the extreme left of the frieze is seen the

Marriage of "Siva and Parvati".

skill of the sculptor. The animated vivacity expressed in the composition is easily recognised. We enter next the pillared corridor. On its walls could be observed the sculptures of Ganesha and the subsidiary deities, found also around the smaller shrines outside the main temple at Elephanta.

The "Tandava" Dance

Leaving the corridor, facing the open courtyard, we see another doorway with the "Tandava Nritya" carved over its lintel. There are only fragments of the original dancing figure of Siva now perceptible. But the sculptor's unfettered art and vision could be traced even now by the outlines of the patterned rhythm. The doorway is interesting in other ways. Notice the architectural pre-occupation of the sculptor who has carved "the cushioned" columns, the geometric pattern and the leaf mouldings on the panels beside the central dancing figure under the arch. Look carefully at the figure "dwarpala" (?) on each side of the doorway near the base and also at the fragments of the lions at the base. As we cross the threshold, we enter another big court and find ourselves confronted with large-scale sculptures over the door and on the wall which separates it from the main hall and shrine of the temple.

Marriage of Siva and Parvati

Over the door we see a carved frieze, covering the whole length of the wall, of unusual interest. Notice

the architectural pre-occupation again of the sculptor who divides the frieze with clear indication of the columned pavilion. Just over the top of the doorway and underneath the "toranna" arch with "makara" ends and "kirtimukh" keystone is seen Siva with a massive staff. On the outer edge of the "toranna" he is surrounded by flying figures with garlands, apsaras and maidens in attendance. On the extreme left corner of the frieze, inside a columned pavilion, is seen the "Marriage of Siva and Parvati."

Restive Nandi

On the extreme right corner of the frieze, inside a similar pavilion, is seen a Siva narrative of uncommonly remarkable interest. Siva is, apparently, playing with what seems to be the loose ends of the drapery which enfolds Parvati. A woman with an enquiring stoop stands close by and "Nandi" could be seen overlooking both. On a closer examination, the sculptured narrative suggests rather a more dramatic and unusual episode. Parvati is, it would seem, frightened of the restive "Nandi" and Siva is trying to pacify her and restrain her from running away in panic. The terror in the features and stoop of the woman and the men around her, the prolonged arm of Siva and one of his attendants on the extreme right holding the horns of "Nandi" and curbing the wild rush of the animal would confirm the impression.

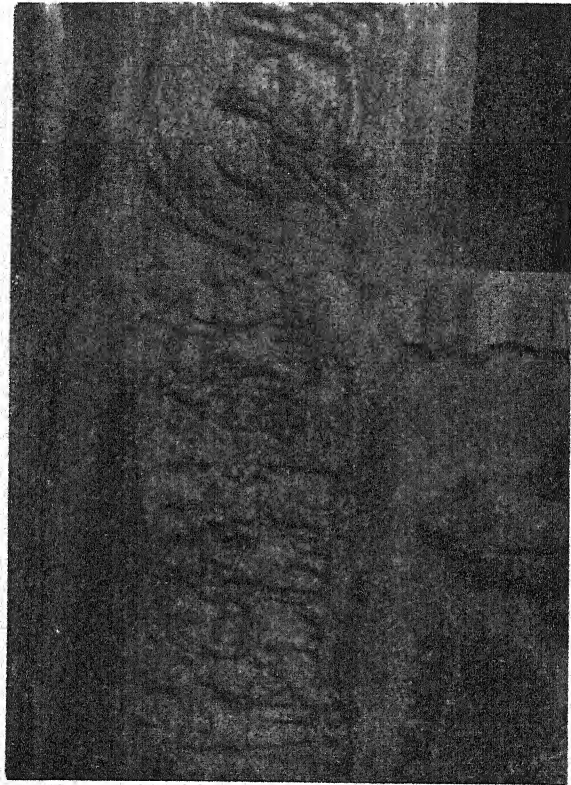


EAST VESTIBULE—RESTIVE NANDI
MARRIAGE OF SIVA—RIGHT SECTION

A Siva narrative of uncommonly remarkable interest. Parvati is frightened of the restive Nandi. Siva is restraining her from running away in panic. One of the attendants holds the horns and curbs the wild rush of the animal.

No. 32.

At Jogeshwari



EAST VESTIBULE—MARRIAGE OF SIVA-PARVATI (LEFT SECTION)
The architectural pre-occupation of the sculptor is here evident. Inside the columned pavilion may be seen the "Marriage of Siva-Parvati".

The Dwarpalas

On the wall alongside the central door are the two figures of "dwarpalas" in imposing majesty of attitude. They could be profitably compared with the "Dwarpalas" around the sanctuary of the main temple at Elephanta. We have already observed a similar figure carved as a motif on a minute scale on the post near the bases of the door from which we entered this court. Inside the main hall of the temple on the doorways of the central shrine could be seen, with some difficulty and with the aid of powerful light, sculptures scattered at their bottom and dimly perceptible on the top and sides. It was not possible for me to secure the photographs of the doorways I aspired to secure. When these photographs which could be taken only with powerful arch lights, would be available they would disclose, I am sure, many architectural and sculptural motifs and objects important in the historic evolution of Indian architecture and sculpture. The few glimpses I could obtain with the aid of the flickering light I had with me served only to increase my curiosity.

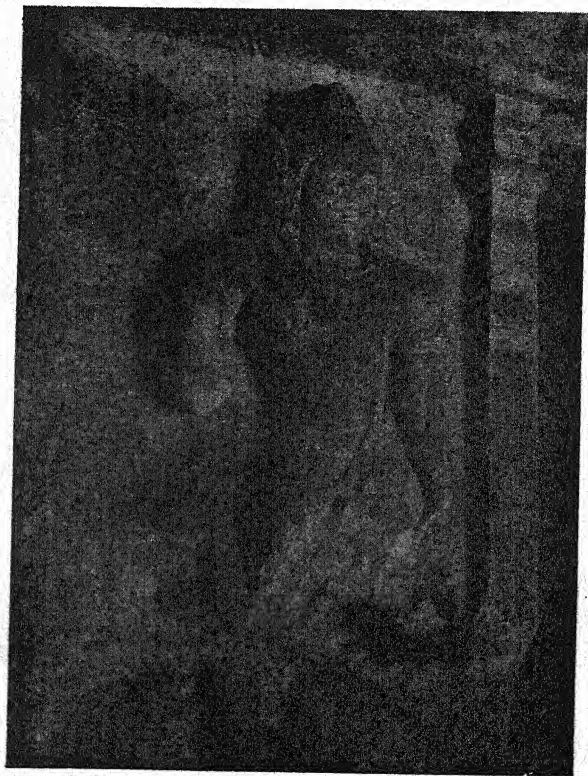
Sculptured Doorways

I could see on the sculptured lintel of the doorway of the shrine on the west figures, particularly the central Siva figure, more or less, similar to the one found on the door of the eastern entrance to the

hall. On the eastern doorway of the shrine could be seen in the darkest corner on the top faintly illumined architectural and sculptural motifs nearly similar to those more clearly observable on the door forming the southern entrance to the hall from the verandah. There seemed, however, to be some difference between the southern door of the hall and the eastern door of the shrine. While the carvings of the southern door of the hall do not suggest the introduction of birds fluttering over canopied pavilions, carvings on the doorway of the eastern side of the shrine bear traces of the joyous motif. The bases of the shrine doors have been covered with sculptures of uneven size, character and quality. It is not easy to grasp the scheme of their arrangement as they have been in the dark and scattered.

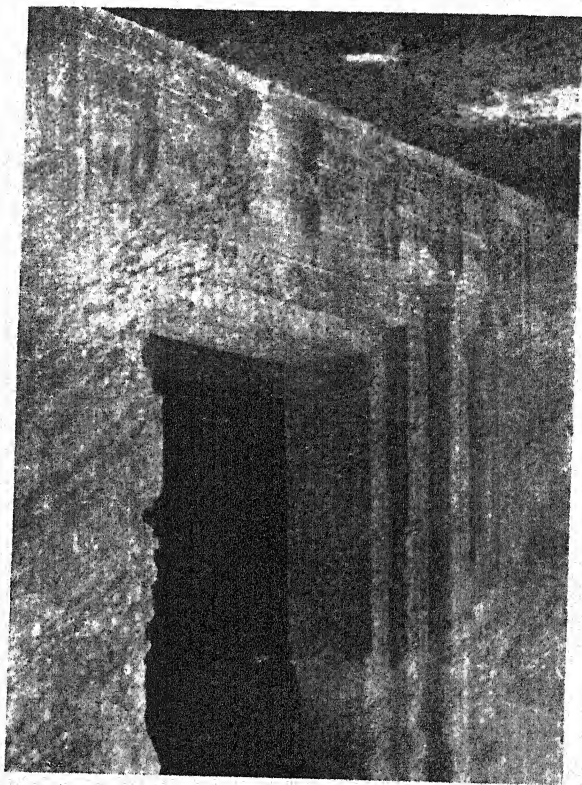
Sculptured Courts

The sculptures in the courts entered from the western passage of the cave, its present main entrance, have disappeared and the corroded rock surface in the courts reveal here and there only the minutest fragments of carving. Over the columns, on the left, may be seen broken panels carved with images. One of them depicts a lively horse. From the fragments in the chambered court, it may be conjectured, however, that its walls were once decorated with large sculptures. One of the sculptures was, in all likelihood, of Siva as Mahayogi.



EAST VESTIBULE—DWARPALA

On the wall alongside the central door are the two figures of "dwarpalas" in imposing majesty of attitude. They could be profitably compared with the "dwarpalas" around the sanctuary of the main temple at Elephanta—(Page 55).



**CARVED DOOR
SOUTHERN VERANDAH—MAIN ENTRANCE**

The doors and windows of the southern verandah show carvings of delicate elegance which could not be overlooked. The "horse-shoe" motif, the figures peeping out of covered balconies, the "river goddesses" at the extreme top corners and the carved compartments on the door jambs are noteworthy.

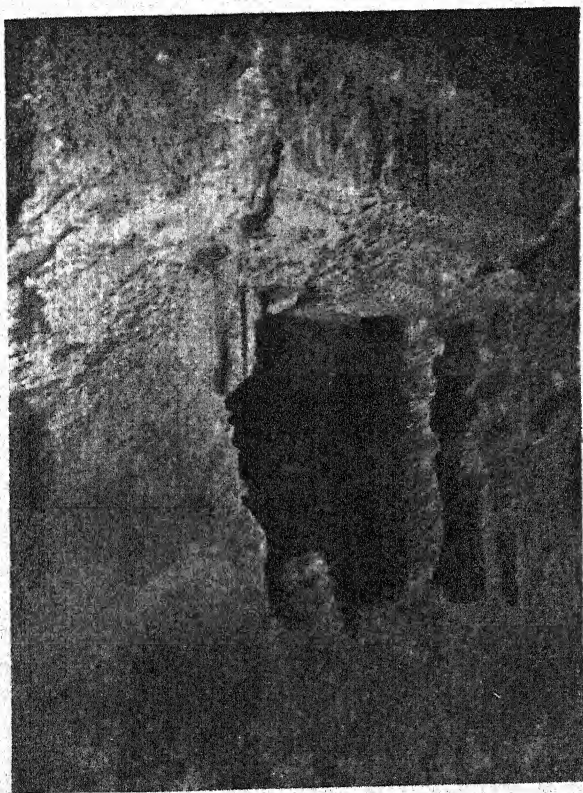
The fragment of a broken foot in the compartment on the opposite side would suggest, perhaps, one of the dancing figures of Siva. The doorway is sculptured like the one on the east entrance to the hall and like it, it is flanked by two large-scale "Dwarpalas" or "Yakshas."

The doors and windows on the southern side of the hall, leading from the verandah, show carvings of delicate elegance which could not be overlooked. On the lintel of the central door on the verandah could be seen the usual architectural pre-occupation of the Indian sculptor. But the architecture shown here is, distinctly, different from the one shown, for example, in the columned pavilions carved on the doors of the courts, on the east, outside the main hall. Here the "horse-shoe", the figures peeping out of covered balconies, the "river-goddesses," at the extreme corners are prominent. Equally prominent are the carved panels door jambs on the entrance. On the window to its left may be observed another series of neatly carved panels and sculptures.

An Important Image

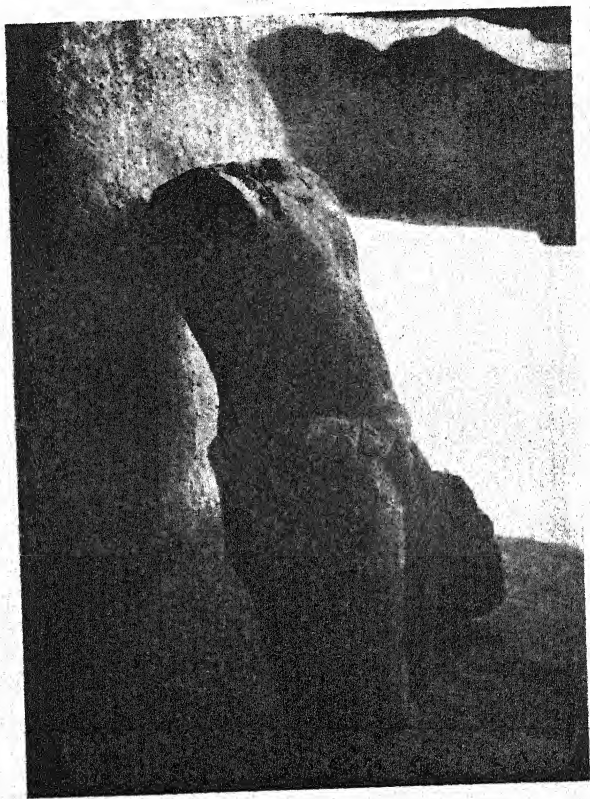
Opposite the main entrance to the verandah, standing very near its edge, a stone image was found arranged. It is difficult to guess its original position. Probably, it was one of the series of sculptures at the bases of the shrine in the main hall. A similar statue was seen by me some years ago

reclining against one of the southern columns of the main hall. This image is of indisputable importance to the students of the evolution of Indian sculpture, particularly in Western India. Its plastic qualities are, like the plastic qualities of the sculptures in the main hall at Elephanta, distinct from the qualities of contemporary sculptures elsewhere in other rock-cut temples. It is clearly articulate and expressive of masculine vigour. Burgess saw on the capital of the pillars of the verandah "struts carved with a female figure and dwarf standing under foliage." These could be seen no longer. The "restored" columns show no traces of them. Only, on the small chapel on the western side of the verandah could be seen the strut figures of women referred to by Burgess. Around the verandah on the southern side several minor shrines and chambers with images of subsidiary deities have been grouped. The sculptures in the excavated compartments just opposite the verandah have been left in incomplete fragments.



**CARVED WINDOW
SOUTHERN VERANDAH-WINDOW**

On the window on the left of the Southern Verandah are a series of neatly carved panels and sculptures.

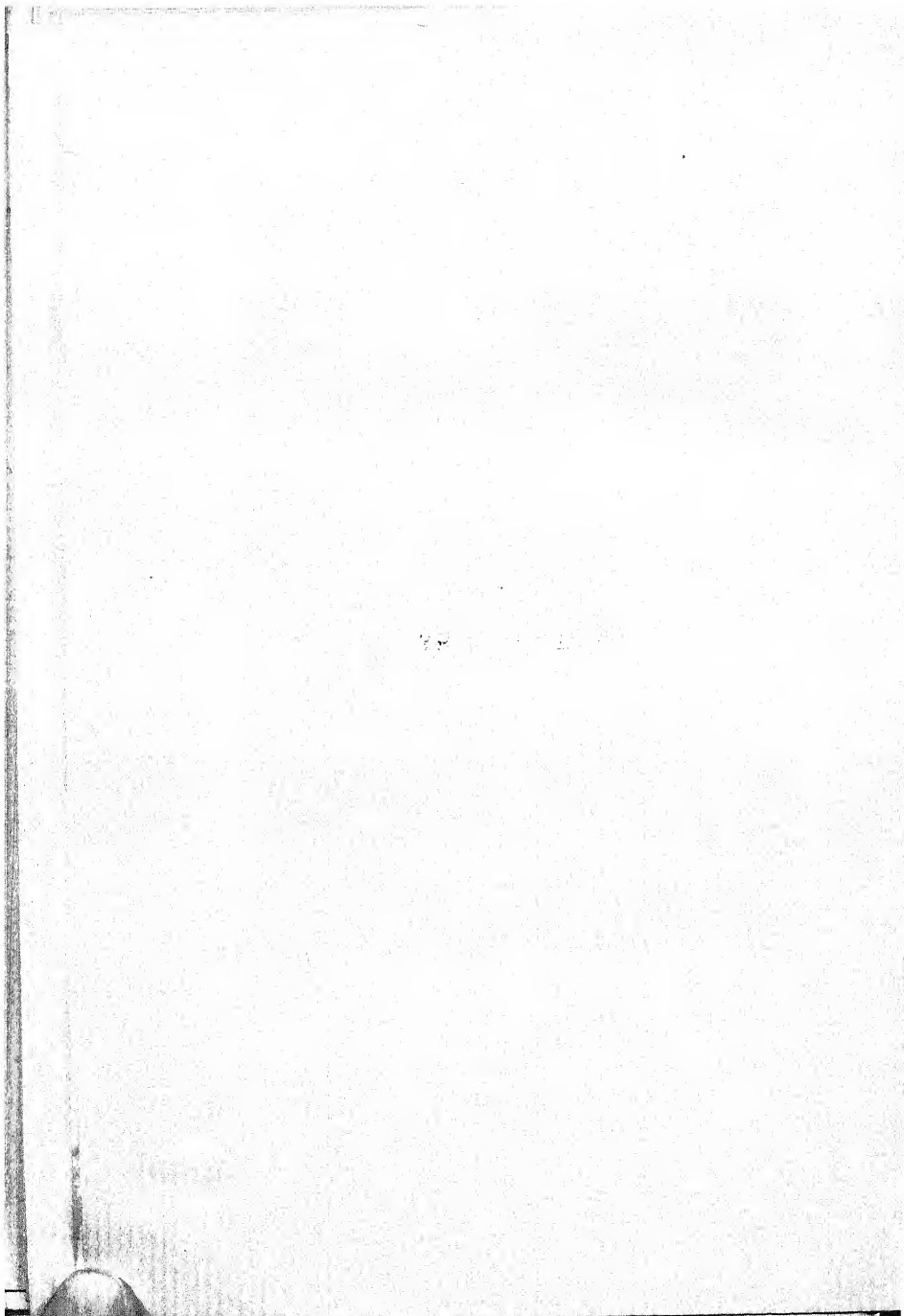


SOUTHERN VERANDAH—UNRECOGNISED TORSO

The image is of indisputable importance to the students of the evolution of Indian sculpture. It is clearly articulate and expressive of masculine vigour. It is distinct in plastic qualities from the contemporary sculptures in other rock-cut temples.

(ii)

ARCHITECTURE



"I know no instance in which an architect, Buddhist, Brahmanical or Mahometan has copied a building of former age."

—J. Fergusson.

"Indeed so numerous have the details become that the reader, pre-occupied with the identification and differentiation of the decorated parts, is in danger of losing sight of the whole and the student who set out to gain a little knowledge about architecture finds himself only on the road to become an authority upon ornament."

—Frank Rutter.

"In earlier times the favourite plan of mediæval mansion had been a series of two or three quadrangles or courts, one behind the other, and with the main entrance in the face of the first. Haddon Hall is a standard specimen given in every text book, but a very much earlier—and what is to the point a much more accessible—example of typical mediæval building is provided by Queen's College, Cambridge."

—Frank Rutter.

To the student of architectural composition and designs, the rock-cut temple at Jogeshwari offers one of the most instructive and inspiring examples. The aim and object of worship which indicated the purpose of the building and decided its architectural design were identical at Elephanta and at Jogeshwari. The artistic aim and aspiration of the architects of Elephanta and of Jogeshwari were also identical. They aspired to interpret the functional values, the truly

architectural vision, with the aid of architectural logic and in terms of live architecture. But their artistic problems were, perceptibly, tangibly, different. The camel-backed hillock of the Jogeshwari caves was, obviously, different from the wide, almost even, expanse of the rock surface at Elephanta. Consequently, the plan, the interior arrangements, the scheme of "decorative" sculptures, the position of subsidiary "chapel" courts, corridors and courtyard for caves had to be changed. For the architect of the Jogeshwari temples it was, not by any chance, a question merely of "copying" contemporary rock-cut temples or of just providing a random link with the "Buddhist" architectural forms from which they have been believed to have been "derived" or with the mechanical "imitation" of structural temples. The natural sloping incline of the hillock implied materially uneven heights. He had, therefore, to select the highest and fairly even compass of the slope, for the main hall and shrine. After he selected it, he followed the inevitable architectural logic. He closed its side on the north, left the south side for subsidiary structures and opened up the east and west sides for the main approaches to the temple. He decided the axis. The structure of the rock, again, led him to decide the interior arrangements, the position of the courts, corridors and courtyards as well as the scheme for "decorative" sculptures. The courts, corridors and courtyard were, naturally, placed along-

side the main approaches. And, the sloping incline which limited the width of the approaches limited also the width of the wall space for sculptures.

Doors for Artistic Scheme

The important narrative sculptures were, thus, placed not around the main shrine in the hall, as at Elephanta, but over the series of doors down the main approaches. The decisive scheme and design of the series of doorways thus decorated, centralised and accentuated carries out identically the same artistic purpose as the one accomplished by the series of columns in the main hall of the Elephanta shrine facing the ringed bases of the Nandi statue on the east. The attention of the worshipper or pilgrim is irresistibly directed towards the graphic, silhouetted pattern of the symbol and sanctuary of the temple.

The archæological importance of the Jogeshwari cave temples has been, by previous writers often, pointed out. But its unusual architectural importance has been, with the perfunctory attitude and standardised outlook characteristic of antiquarians, continuously overlooked. Burgess generalised that "the principal architectural feature" observed by him in "nearly all other cave temples is the pillars." At Jogeshwari he finds "a deterioration in architectural style and a divergence from Buddhist forms of representation in sculpture." These comments are typical.

Architecture Misconceived

The conception or rather the misconception of architecture, architectural forms and values has been rooted deep in the minds of an overwhelming majority of students and exponents of Indian architecture. With them architecture is only "ornament," to be examined in parts and judged by "features." And, since "Brahmanical" cave temples are almost universally assumed to be "derived" from "Buddhist" cave temples, every "divergence" from the original forms is, as a matter of course, presumed to be a "deterioration." Burgess points out that the Jogeshwari cave resembles "Dumar Lena or Sita Ka Nani" at Ellora and the great cave at Elephanta "in many respects, but the hall here is square instead of being star-shaped as in them, and the sanctuary is situated exactly in the middle of the hall surrounded by an aisle separated from it by pillars equally spaced." "The most interesting fact, however, connected with this cave is," he adds, "that the mode in which these adjuncts (porticoes and courts) are added, is such that we lose nearly all trace of the arrangement of Buddhist Vihara in its plan, and were it not for the intermediate examples would hardly be able to find whence its forms were derived." The antiquarian pre-occupation and outlook could not be more clearly expressed. It would appear that almost the only difference he notices between, say,

the main temple at Elephanta and the one at Jogeshwari is in the changed position of the sanctuary. The courts and porticoes which he describes as "adjuncts" are, for him, "the most interesting fact connected with this cave." He gives the reason. The mode in which these "adjuncts are added" is such that "we lose nearly all trace of the arrangements of the Buddhist Vihara in its plan."

Rituals, Daily Needs

The difference between Buddhist and Brahmanical forms and rituals of worship which, certainly, decided the difference in the architectural arrangement of their temples, the difference between the localities, material, current conditions and artistic skill which indicated the difference between temples dedicated for the worship of the same faith could not conceivably be realised or recognised by them. Consequently, it is essential to remember that the architect who designed, carved and built the temples for Siva worship had usually to combine in one plan and, not seldom, in one structure the facilities for worship as well as the residential facilities required by the group of priests associated with the temple and by the travelling pilgrims and "yogis." The sheltered courts, corridors, verandahs as well as the open courtyards, tanks and reservoirs were thus daily necessities and an integral part of the temple plan, not merely "adjuncts"

added on for "display" of "style" or "convention."

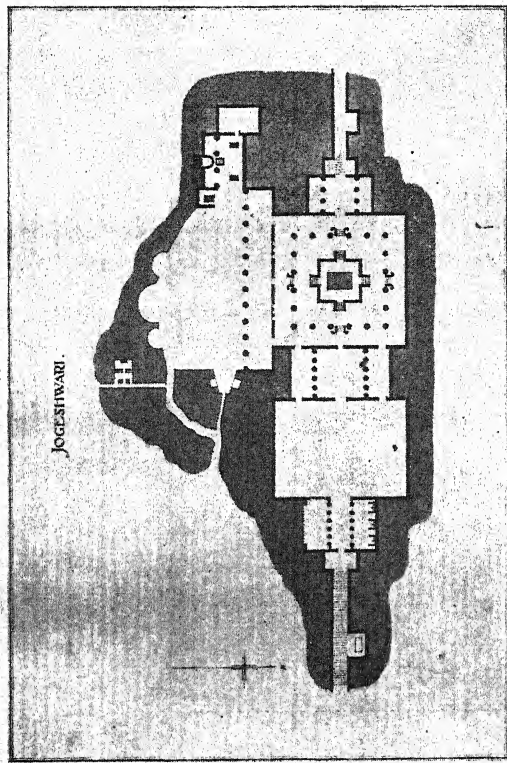
Architectural Logic of Plan

The plan of the Jogeshwari cave-temples is an eloquent testimony not only to the artistic skill but to the architectural logic as well of its master-builders. We have already noticed the architectural logic which decided the position of the main hall and sanctuary. We have also observed the artistic insight, skill and judgment with which the position of the important narrative sculptures was changed to suit the artistic scheme of the series of doors, confronting the narrow passages flanked by courts and courtyards, which with the receding perspective of upright verticals, led to the graphic clarity and charm of the sanctuary. Those obsessed with the archaeological aspects of architecture could not, naturally, observe them. For them, the pillars were the "principal architectural feature".

If we now turn to the verandah on the south and observe carefully its plan and arrangement we could easily forget the set, short-sighted, antiquarian attitude.

Domestic Architecture

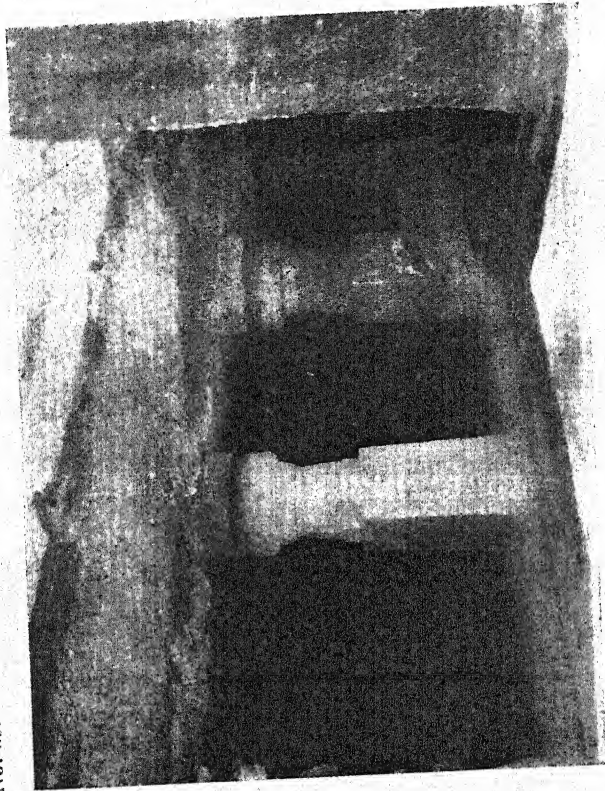
The benches at the extremities of the verandah, with the raised slope to serve as a pillow for the head, the diaper screen on the window opposite and



The plan of the Jogeshwari temples is an eloquent testimony not only to the artistic skill but to the architectural logic as well of the ancient master-builders.

No. 38.

At Jogeshwari



SOUTHERN VERANDAH

The benches at the extremities of the verandah, with the raised slope to serve as a pillow for the head, the diaper screen on the window opposite, the reservoir of cool water by its side all induce the peace and repose for the daily residence of the religious-minded.

the modest doorway, the reservoir of water by its side and the cool shadows of the deeply recessed verandah all induce the peace and repose, the sheltered comfort and quiet so essential for the daily residence of the religious-minded. Except for its length and the scale of its columns, the picture of the verandah could easily be mistaken as a picture of the verandah of any home or domestic structure of almost any place and time in India. The tropical climate, its violent light and heat, the daily necessities of the home, certainly, decided the common architectural forms for the common necessities of home and temple.

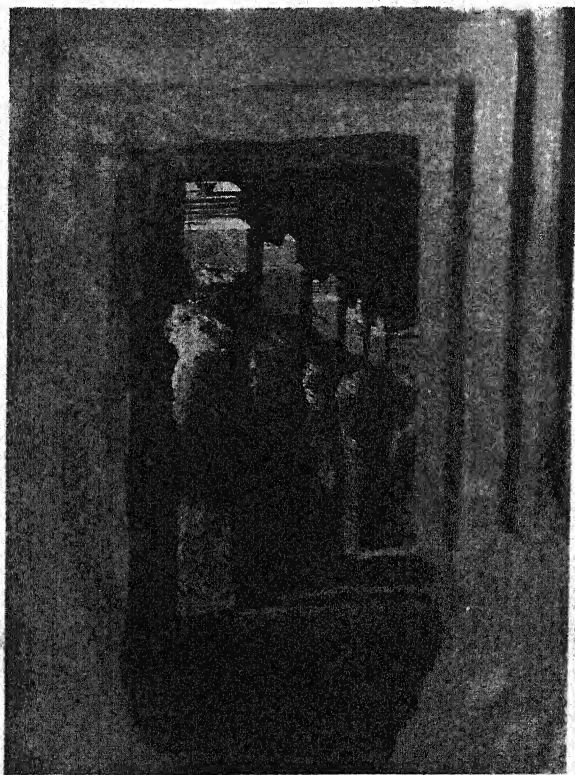
Water Drainage

The excavated chambers across the open courtyard of the verandah contain images of uneven value, some of the chambers as well as the images are incomplete and in fragments. On the south may be observed a small chapel with the linga sanctuary and on the other extreme corner carved in a chamber alongside an extremely narrow corridor, may be found the image of "Durga". The small chamber over the doorway on the east with the "Tandava" panel would also be noticed. The grooves cut out in the floors of most of the southern courts and chambers of the temple indicate the ingenious manner in which the sloping side on the south of the rock was taken advantage of for draining the rain water of the temple. Probably, if these

drains could be restored and could function again the interior of the temple would not be as damp as it seems to be at present and, in all probability, some of the sculptures even now slowly corroding may be saved from further damage by moisture.

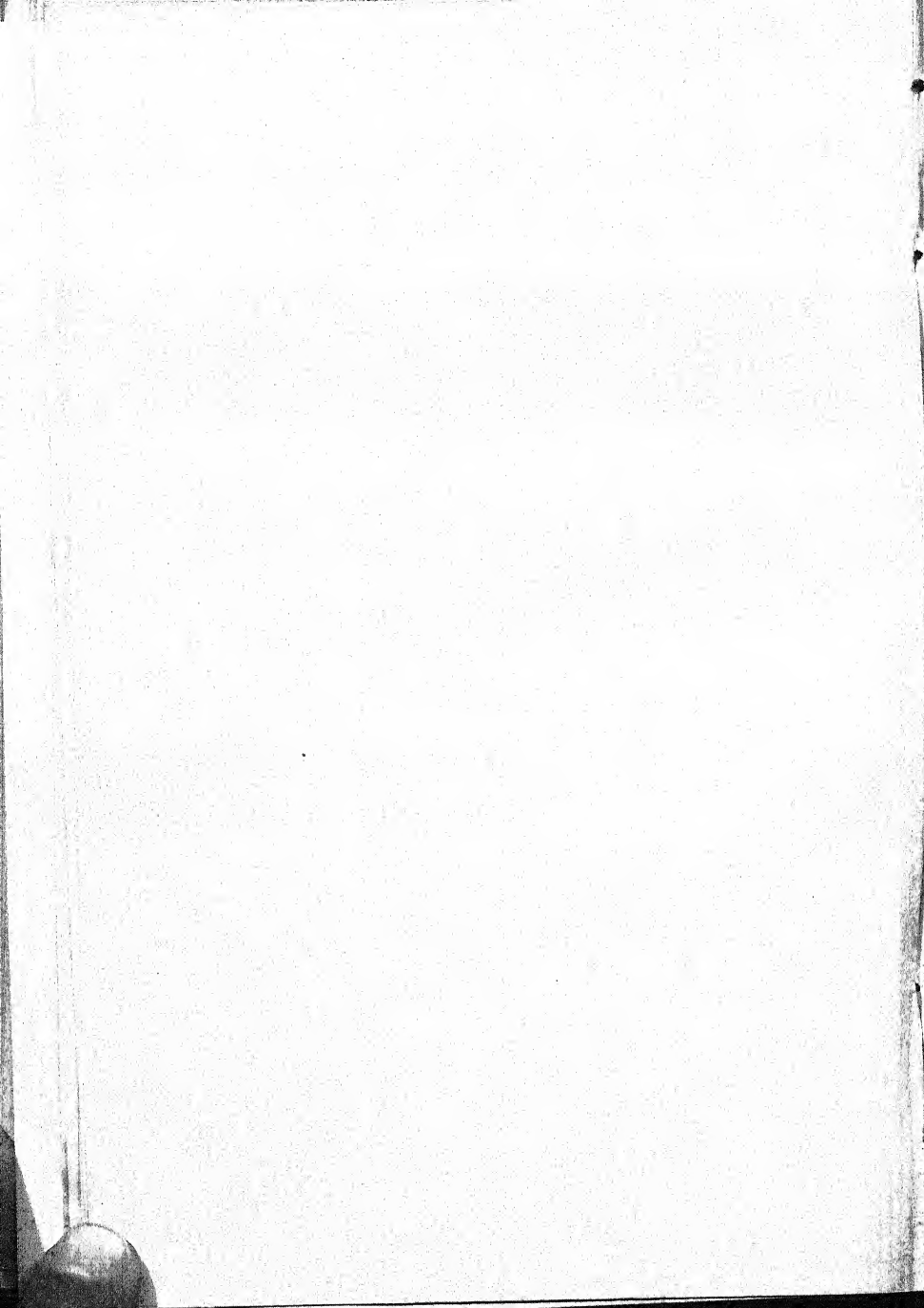
Distinction of Columns

Clues of unquestionable importance to students of Indian architectural evolution could be traced in the architectural forms and motifs employed at Jogeshwari, carved either on the doorways, pillars and pilasters, in sculptured panels, on door lintels and walls. They would require more than ten times the space and volume assigned for this book. The series of ten columns in the verandah on the south and of twenty columns arranged in a square in the main hall of the sanctuary are, obviously, of the same form and character as those which distinguish the main hall of the temples at Elephanta. The architectural propriety and distinction of this type of columns have been recognised by both Burgess and Fergusson, who said, that they "seem never to have been of wood". The distinctive columns utilised in the cave temples at Elephanta, Jogeshwari, and Mandapeshwar should alone have sufficed to arouse them to recognise the architectural distinction and importance of these temples. But they seem to be too obsessed with the antiquarian search for origins in wood and "derived" influences to notice them. However that may be, we

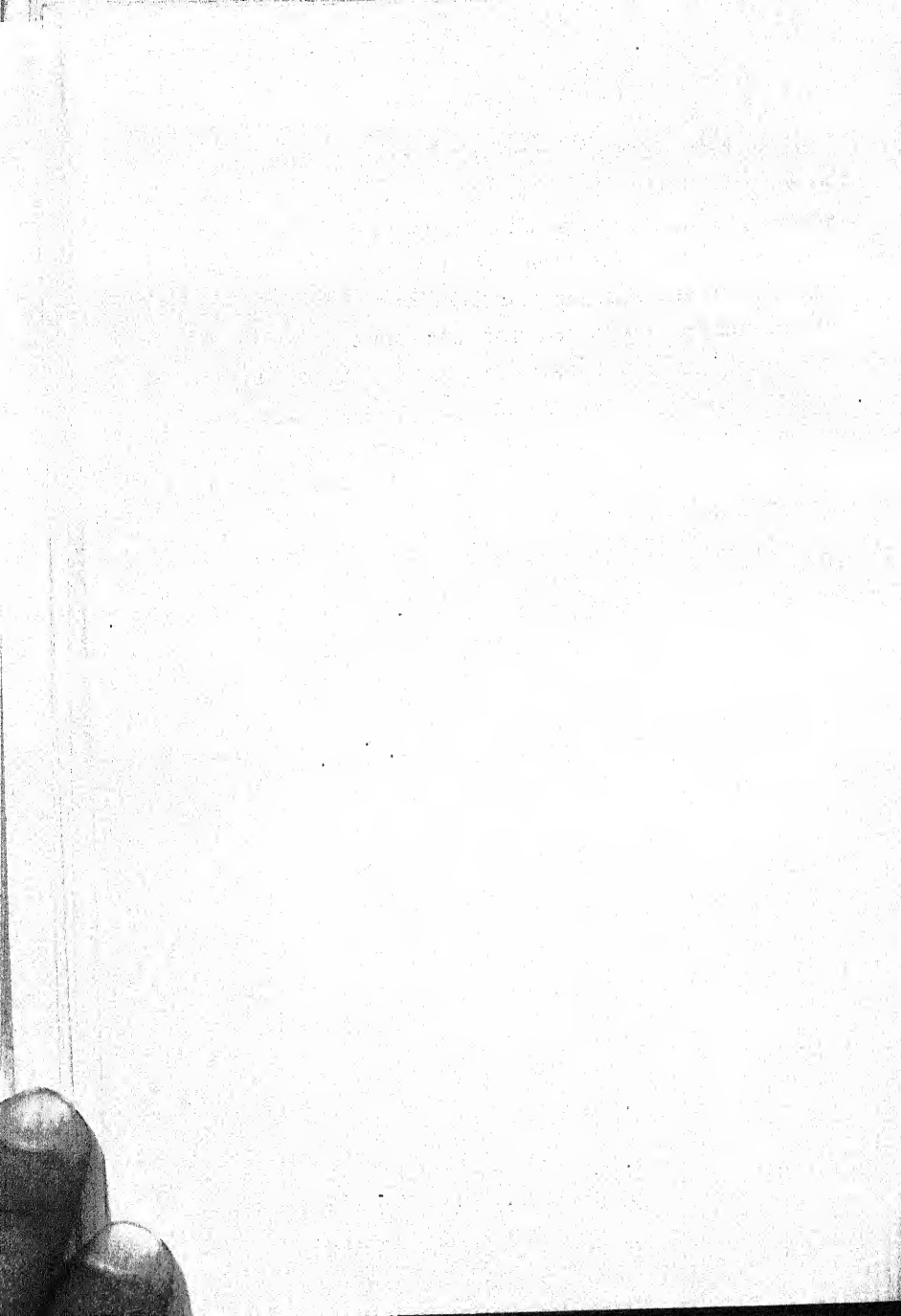


COLONNADE—MAIN HALL

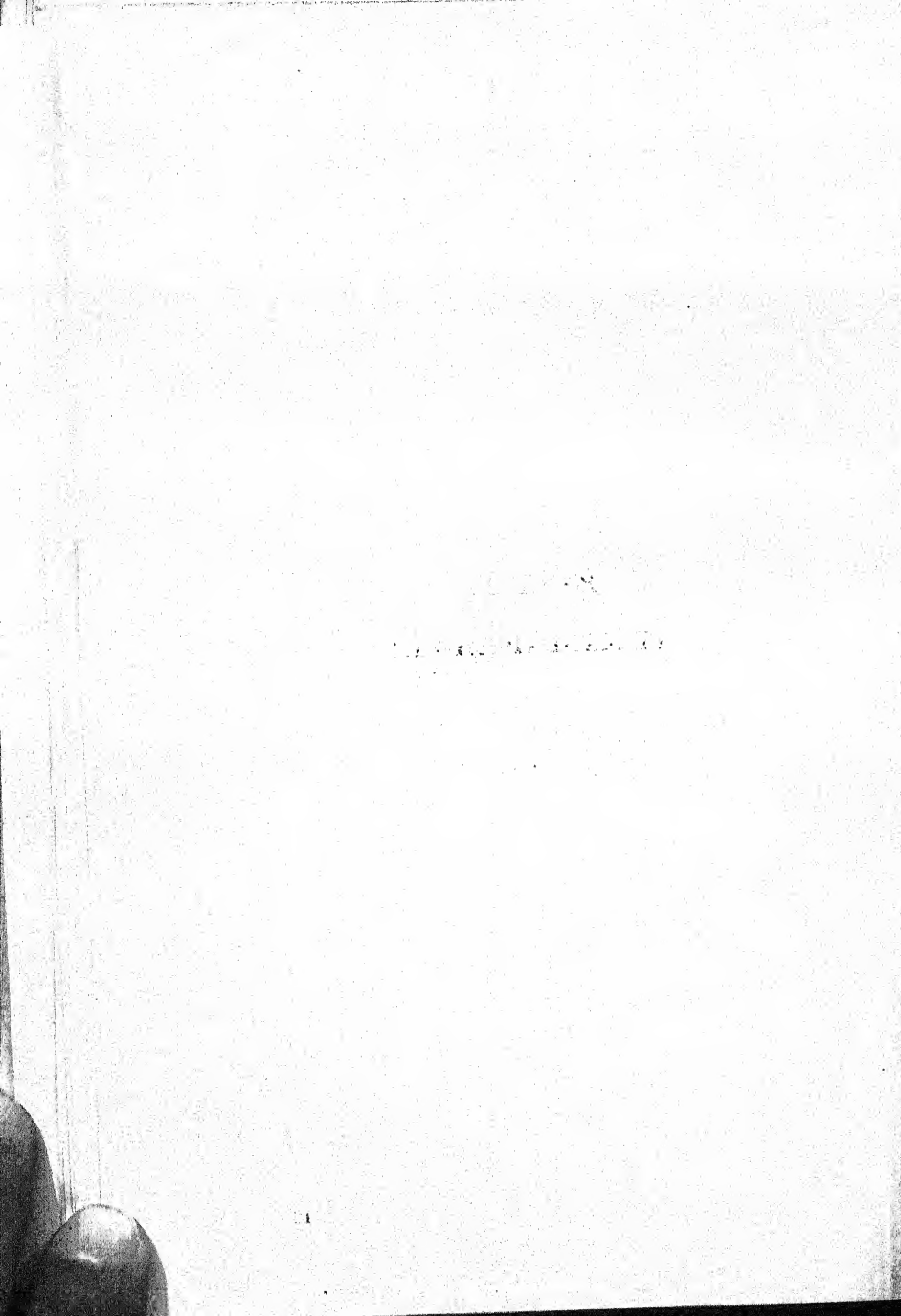
The manner in which the architect of Jogeshwari employs the columns for the main hall of the temple is clear from the magic picture he conjures up with the aid of sunshine and shadow.

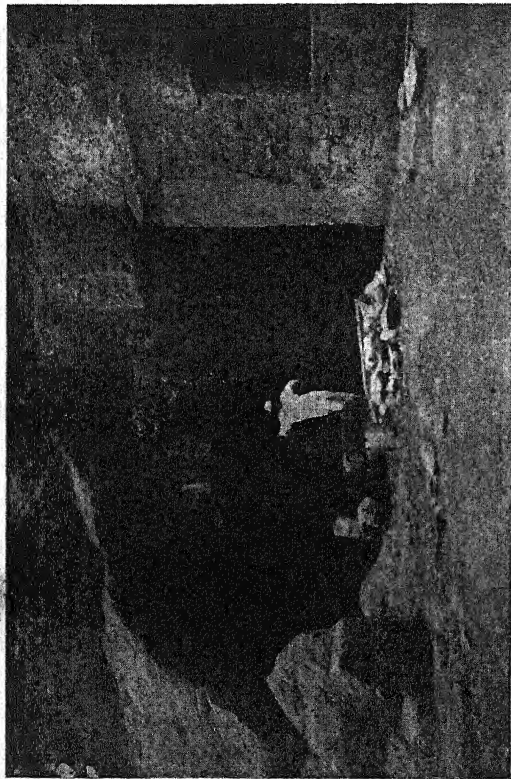


have seen that the ancient Indian architect knew how to employ them. Although the architect of Jogeshwari prefers, naturally and necessarily, the series of doorways for the receding perspective which focusses and directs attention on the sanctuary to the avenue of colonnades employed for the same purpose at Elephanta, he is not insensitive to their right use and beauty. He uses them for the central hall. And, the manner in which he employs them is clear from the magic picture he conjures up with the aid of sunshine and shadow.



PART IV
AT MANDAPESHWAR



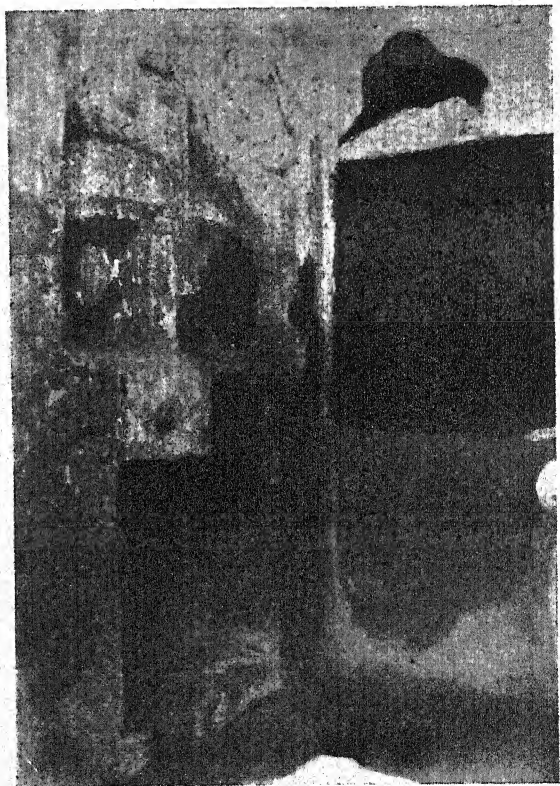


NEWLY BUILT WALL AND RESERVOIR

The wall built for the converted church in front of the original facade of the temples covers the original scheme of sculpture. The newly added portion of the wall may be seen at the right corner of the picture.

No. 41.

At Mandapeshwar



THE CROSS-NICHE IN VERANDAH

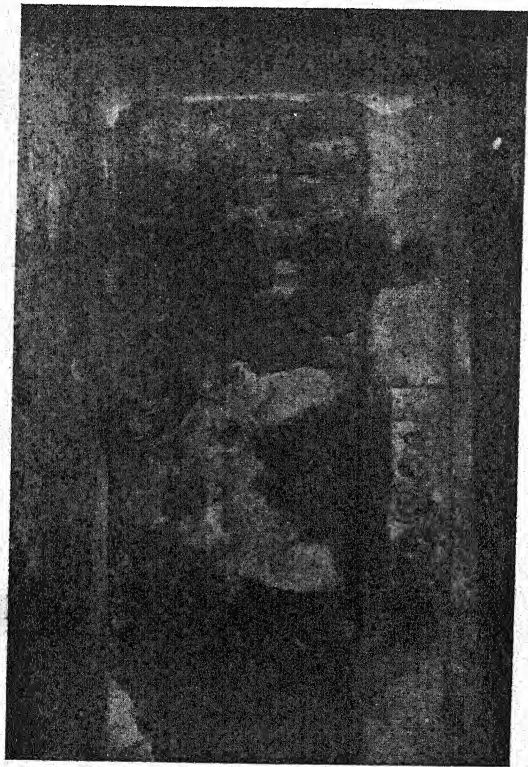
The carved seat, the folds of drapery, traces of sculptures in segments on top easily suggest the "Mahayogi" now substituted by the Cross.

(i)
SCULPTURE



No. 42.

At Mandapeshwar

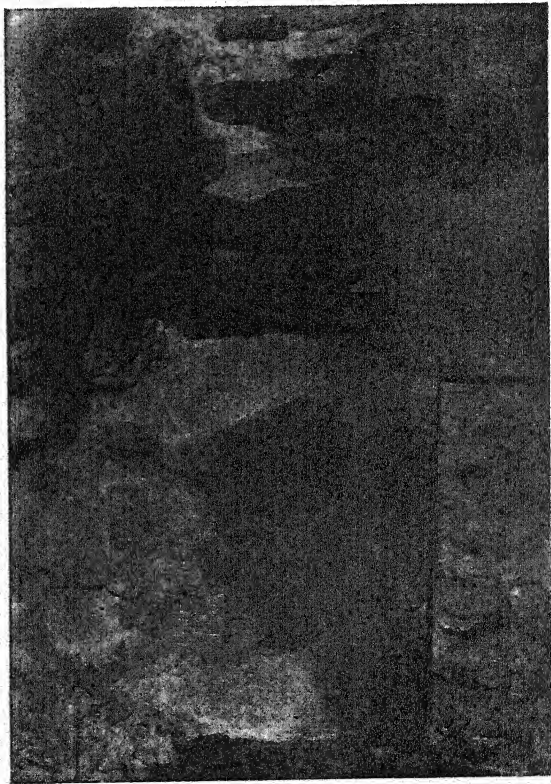


INNER CHAPEL—MAIN HALL.

The inner chapel on the left of the main hall of the Mandapeshwar temple contains a sculptured panel of uncommon importance and interest.

No. 43.

At Mandapeshwar



SCULPTURED PANEL—INNER CHAPEL MAIN HALL

The posture of the central image, its lotus seat together with the Naga figures which surround the lotus stem are clearly reminiscent of sculptural compositions common for Buddhist themes.

The wall, built for the converted church in front of the original façade of the temple, covers the original scheme of the sculptures. If we could visualise the absence of the wall, one end of it could be seen in the photograph covering the sculptured compartment on the north, we could easily understand the scheme. The present wall is on the edge of the original verandah of the temple which was decorated with two sculptured compartments, one on the north and the other on the south.

"The Mahayogi"

The south compartment has at present a carved Cross. But the carved seat and the folds of the drapery of a figure seen underneath it together with the faint traces of sculptures in segments seen at the top would easily suggest the original figure of Siva as a "Mahayogi," now substituted by the Cross.

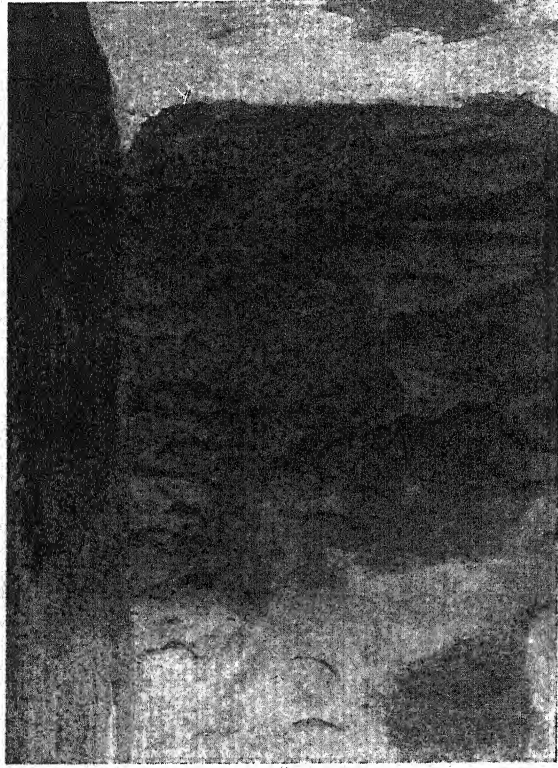
The "Tandava" Dance

At the other corner of the verandah, on the north, could be seen fragments of another figure carved in a similar deeply recessed compartment. Very little except the outlined mass of the original figure could be seen now. But the outline is sufficiently indicative of the attitude of an apparently dancing image. It would not, thus, be very risky to conjecture that it was a Siva dance. And, as it occupies the identical position on the verandah as the one occupied by the

"tandava" Siva on the verandah of the temple at Elephanta, it may be concluded that it was, in all likelihood, the figure of the "tandava" dance of Siva. The similarity of position of the "Mahayogi" image on the verandah of the temple at Elephanta with the remnants of the image on the northern end of the verandah at Mandapeshwar also suggests the identity of the image now in remnants at Mandapeshwar. As we cross the verandah and enter the columned hall we find the shrine in the centre. It was, evidently, a *Linga* sanctuary. It is bare, unadorned, with sculptures.

Rare Sculptured Panel

But the inner chapel on its left, formerly encumbered with refuse now, fortunately, cleared of it, contains in a very dark corner a sculptured panel of uncommon interest. The central image is all but lost. But it is apparent that it has been worked out as a sitting posture. Its lotus seat together with the "Naga" figures which surround the lotus stem which supports the seat are clearly reminiscent of the common sculptural motifs under Buddhist images. This resemblance along with the peculiar composition of the sculptured panel should make us think seriously about the importance, artistic and historic, of the sculptures hitherto, in more sense than one, left in utter darkness. The position of the crouching figures at the base on each side of the central image, the swift passage of the procession of gandharvas and

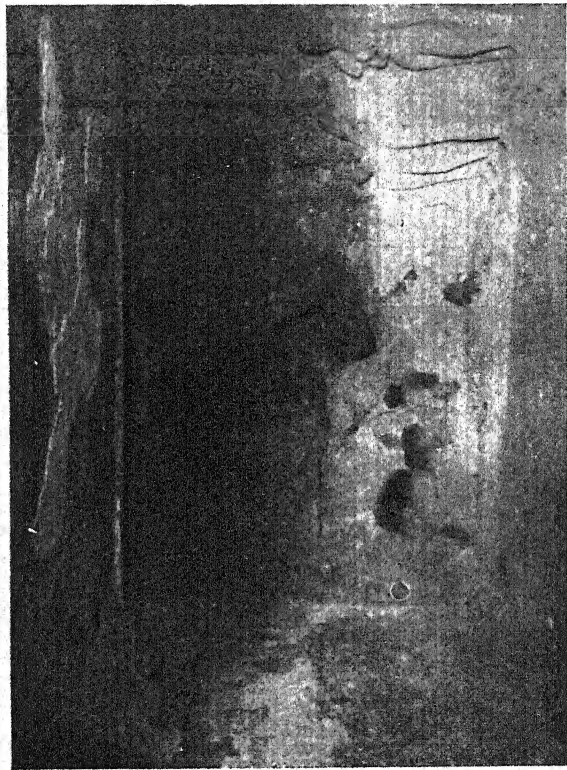


SCULPTURED PANEL—INNER CHAPEL

The position of the crouching figures at the base on each side of the central image, the swift passage of the procession of "gandharvas" and "apsaras," the galloping horses and elephants, the minutely carved compartments of the right corner of the panel suggest many unexplored points of sculptural history.

No. 45.

At Mandapeshwar



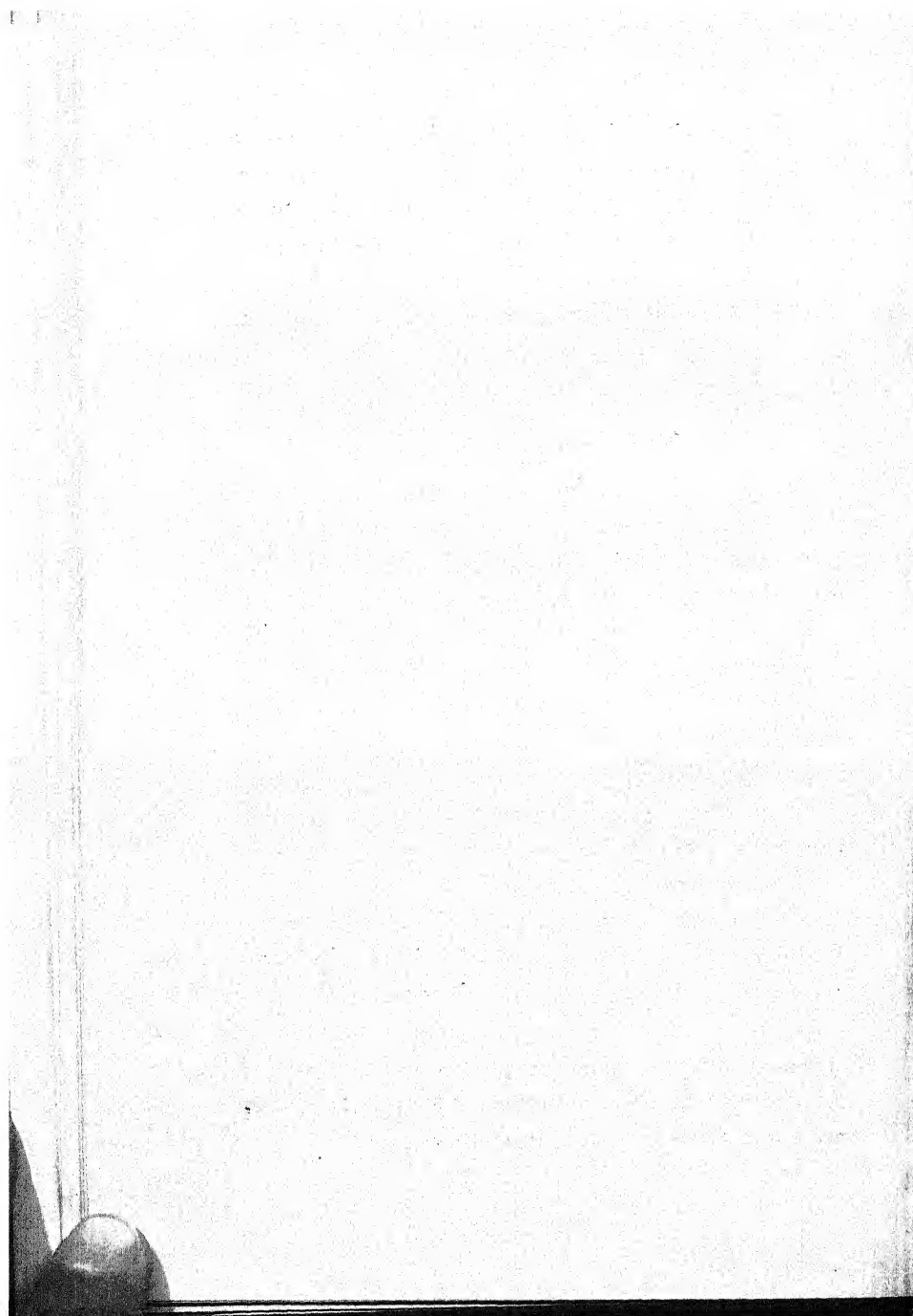
THE "TANDAVA" DANCE

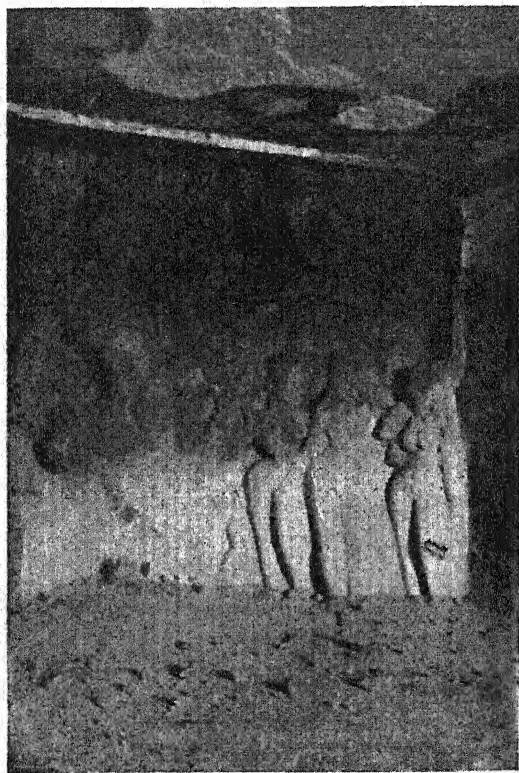
The large-scale sculpture of the "Tandava" dance of Siva resembles, apparently, a similar theme at Elephanta (p. 26).

apsaras and deities, it may be, marked particularly on the right corner of the panel by an extraordinary rendering of galloping horses and elephants as well as by the carved images in minute compartments common in the decorated door jambs of the cave temples, could only be examined adequately at greater length and scope than the one possible in this book. The wall at present covers the southern side of the big hall.

The "Tandava" Dance

Formerly, it led, it would seem, direct to the chamber on the south where, at present, could be discovered the big aperture through which could be seen the large-scale sculpture of the "Tandava" dance of Siva. Conceivably, its resemblance with a similar theme in the panel of the verandah at Elephanta is obvious. Its difference in execution and arrangement should also be equally obvious. For one thing, the subsidiary figures seem to be larger and they have greater relieving space than similar figures at Elephanta. Secondly, the sculptures, on the whole, are more suggestive of volume, less austere and less formal than the sculptures in the similar panel at Elephanta. The absence of the base, the storied compartments carved on the left corner, the gay absorption of the "mradanga" player on the left, revealed by the abandon of his gestures and the relaxed attitudes of the figures of women on the right are some of its noteworthy features.





THE "TANDAVA" DANCE

The sculptures, on the whole, are more suggestive of volume, less austere and less formal than those at Elephanta. The subsidiary figures are larger with more relieving space than the space assigned to them at Elephanta.

No. 17.

At Mandapeshwar

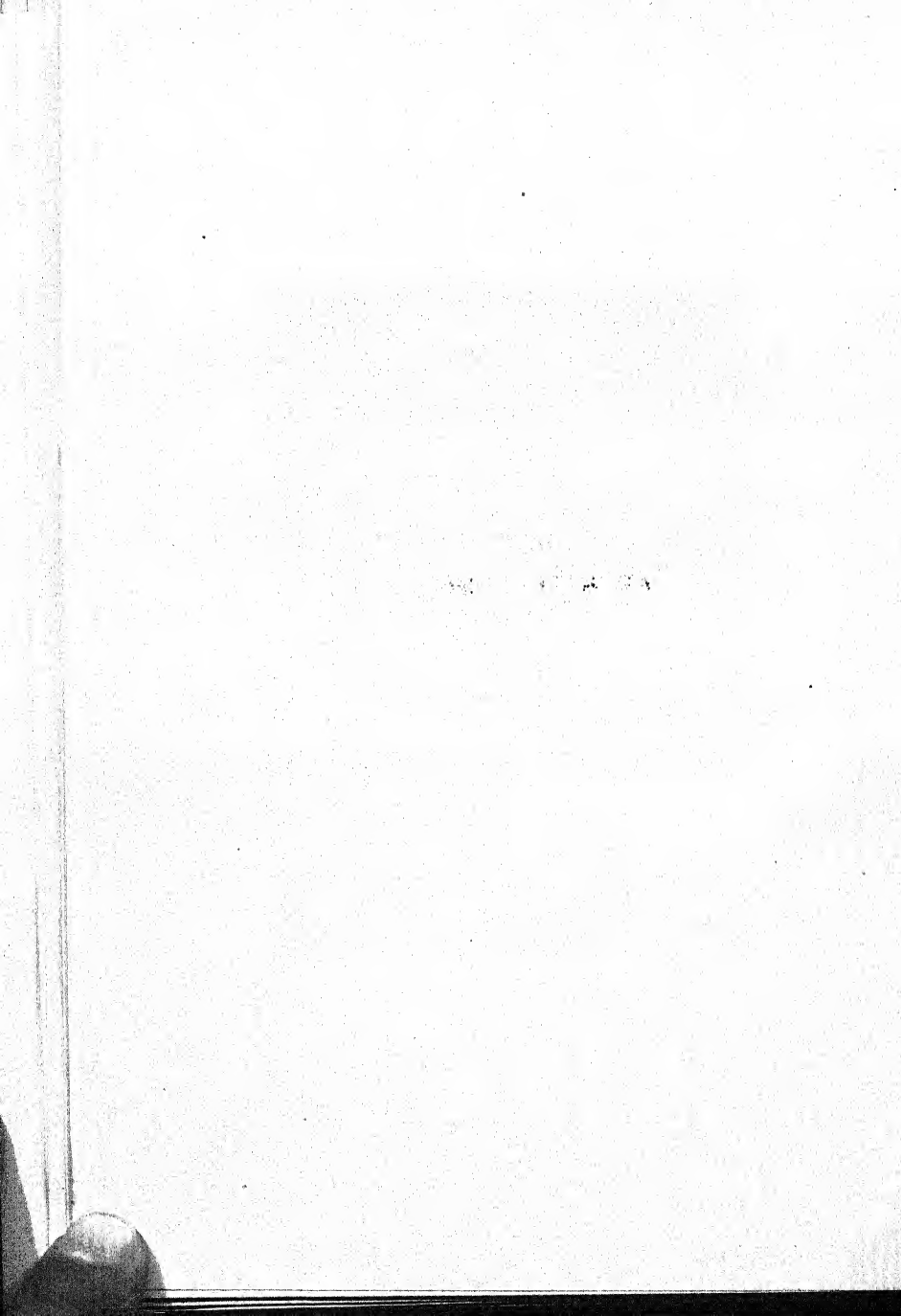


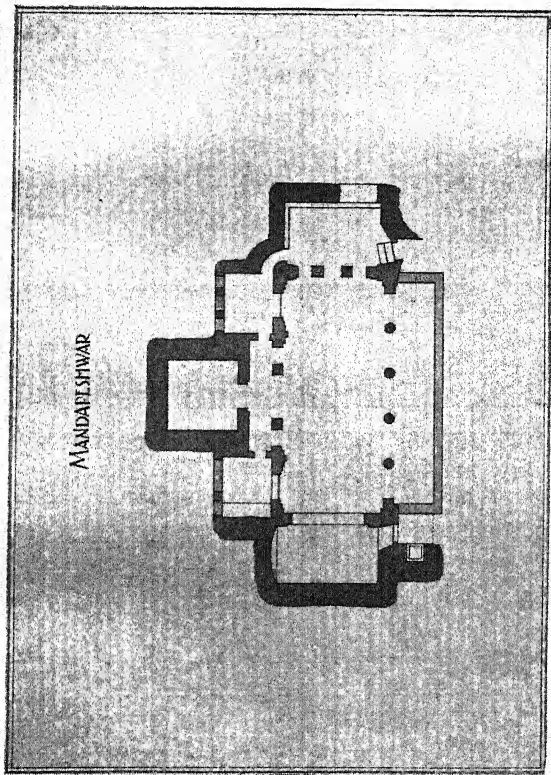
THE "TANDAVA" DANCE

The absence of the base, the storied compartments carved on the left corner, the gay abandon of the "Mridanga" player are noteworthy features.

(ii)

ARCHITECTURE

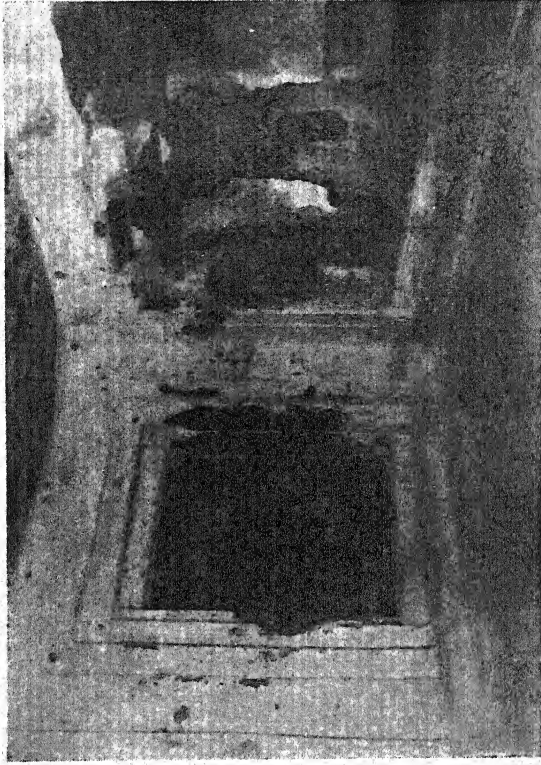




The plan of the temple at Mandapeshwar is the plan of the "House" of Gods. The newly added walls for the converted church are seen shaded lightly.

No. 49.

At Mandapeshwar



SIDE CHAMBERS—MAIN HALL

The arrangement of the side chambers of the main hall is the arrangement common in Indian domestic architecture.

"No work of art can contain every conceivable factor of beauty for every art is fashioned by a process of selection and to select means you must sacrifice some qualities in order that you may emphasise and give prominence to others."

— Frank Rutter.

The arrangements and plan of the Mandapeshwar temple is, distinctly, suggestive of the unswerved inclination of the ancient master-builders to visualise and compose the temple as a "house of the Gods." The interior of the Mandapeshwar temple is clearly reminiscent of Indian domestic architecture.

"House of Gods"

The absence of sculptures in the main hall and shrine, thus completing the impression of the "House of Gods", is remarkable and significant. The door jambs of the sanctuary have architectural motifs unnoticeable in the other cave temples. Burgess describes the temple thus:—"The mandap or hall measures 51 feet by 21 inside, with four pillars in front of the Elephanta type, but more richly ornamented, and evidently of more modern date. At each end is a smaller room, divided from the hall by two pillars and their pilasters. That to the left has been entirely screened off by a wall, but behind the wall a large sculpture was found of Siva dancing with accompanying figures. In the back of the hall is a small square room at

each end, which led into an inner room with two pillars in front; these are now walled up. In the middle of the back wall is the vestibule of the shrine, with two pillars in front of it. The shrine itself is about 16 feet square, but is now empty." The walls which separated the inner room from the square room at the back of the hall to which Burgess refers have now disappeared. And, it was in the inner room at the left of the hall that the series of sculptures described earlier were found. As seen in the photograph, a pulpit in what Burgess calls the vestibule of the shrine obstructs the view of the passage which formerly led from the shrine to the side door of the square room on the left of the hall.

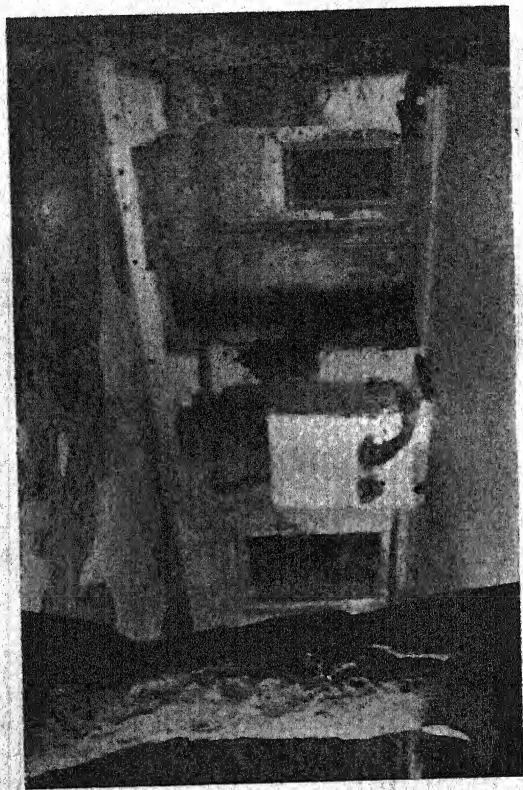
The Columns

The columns are not all of the "Elephanta type." The columns in the inner room at the back of the hall and those adjoining the pillared chamber on the extreme right of the hall indicate different varieties.



VERANDAH PANEL AND COLUMN MOTIF

The column of the side chamber of the main hall seen on the left of this picture shows that these columns and the columns in the inner chapel are not of the "Elephanta" pattern. Faint traces of paintings may be observed between the capital of the columns which separate the verandah and the main hall at the south.



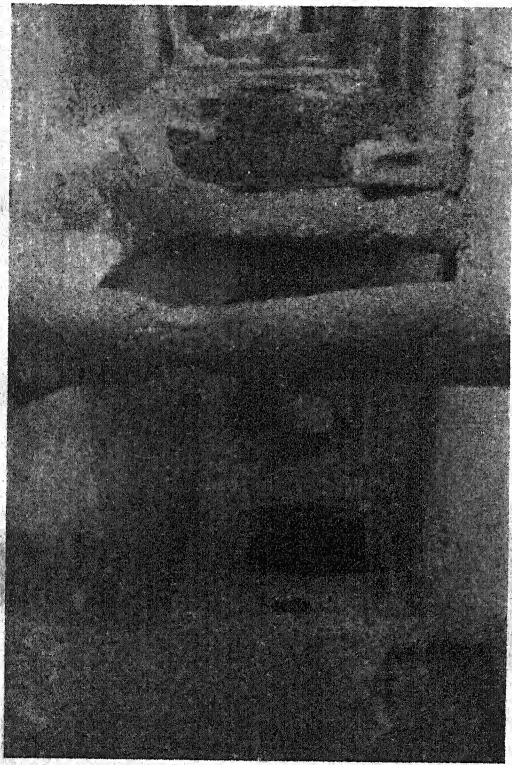
SHRINE AND PULPIT—MAIN HALL.

The absence of sculptures in the main hall of the temple, the distinction of the architectural motifs over the door jamb of the main shrine are peculiar to Mandapeshwar. The pulpit for the converted church may be seen between two columns alongside the vestibule of the main shrine.

PART V
AT KANHERI

No. 52.

At Mandapeshwar

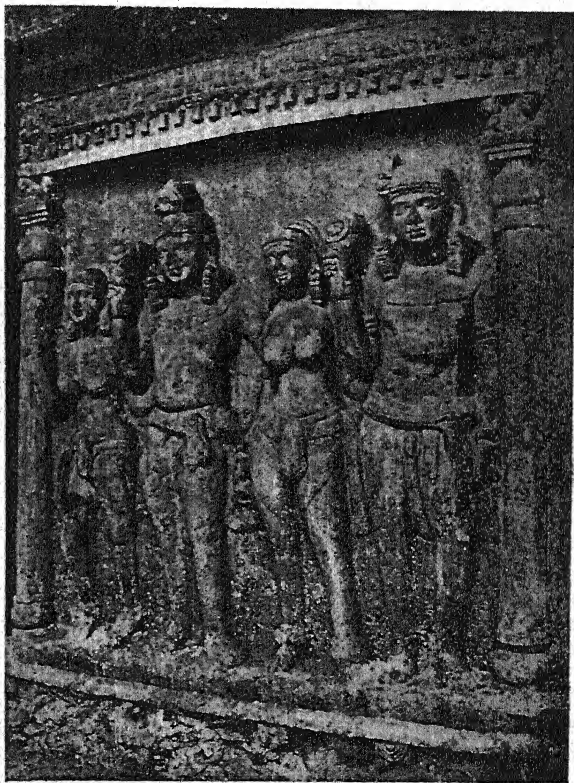


COLONNADE—MAIN HALL

The columns in the main hall resemble the columns at Elephanta.

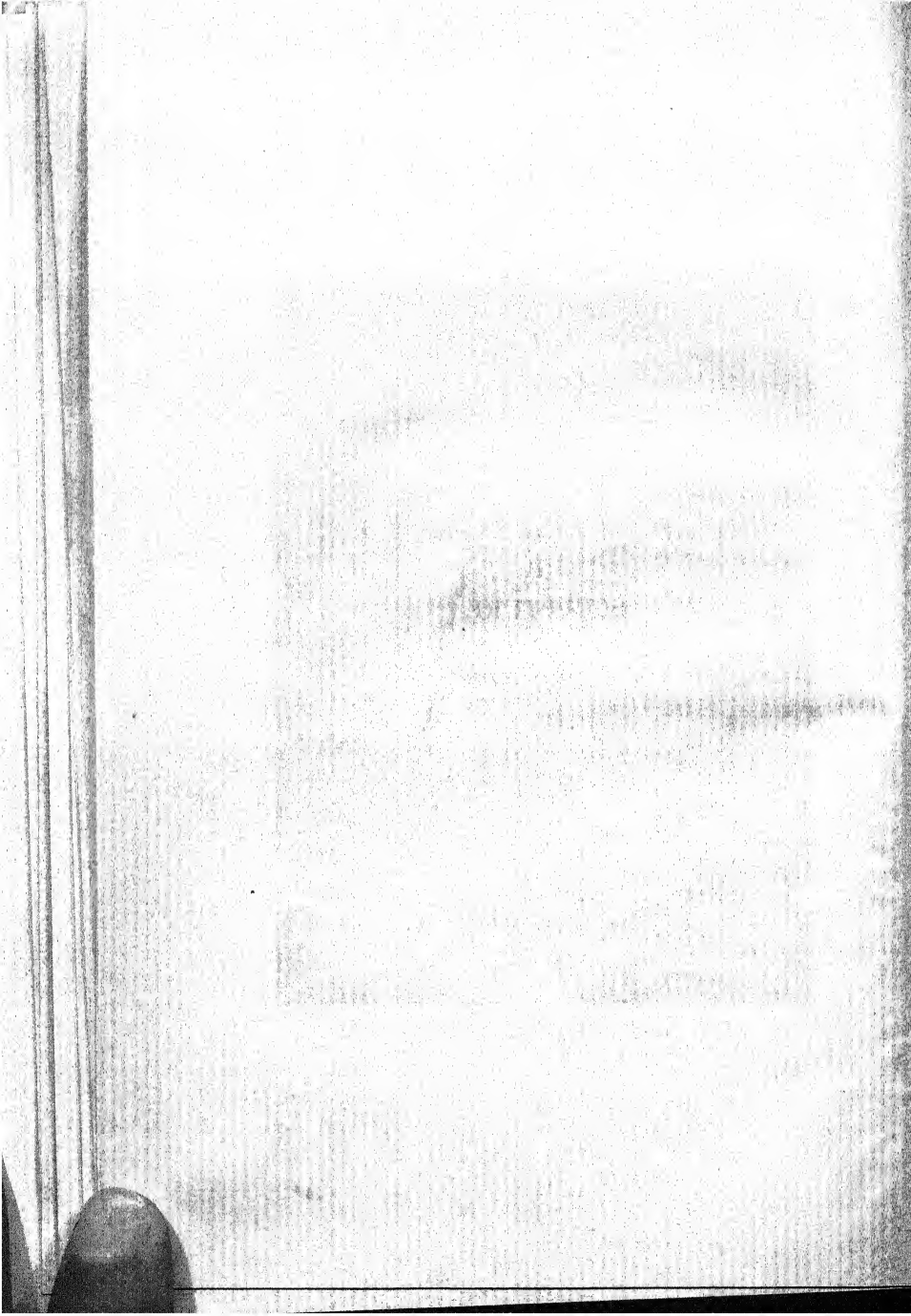
No. 53.

At Kanheri



THE ROYAL GROUPS—VERANDAH

(i)
SCULPTURE



Fergusson has, not without reason, judged the caves at Kanheri to be, on the whole, "much less interesting than either Ajunta, Ellora or Karli, the great chaitya cave being very similar, though very inferior to that of the last-named series, and presenting no peculiarity not seen in the other, while none of the vihars can compare with those of the first two, either in size or design, the greatest part of them consisting merely of a small square cell, with a small verandah of two columns in front". The great chaitya cave is the first and the most important of the Buddhist caves we meet on our way up the hill.

"The Crude Style"

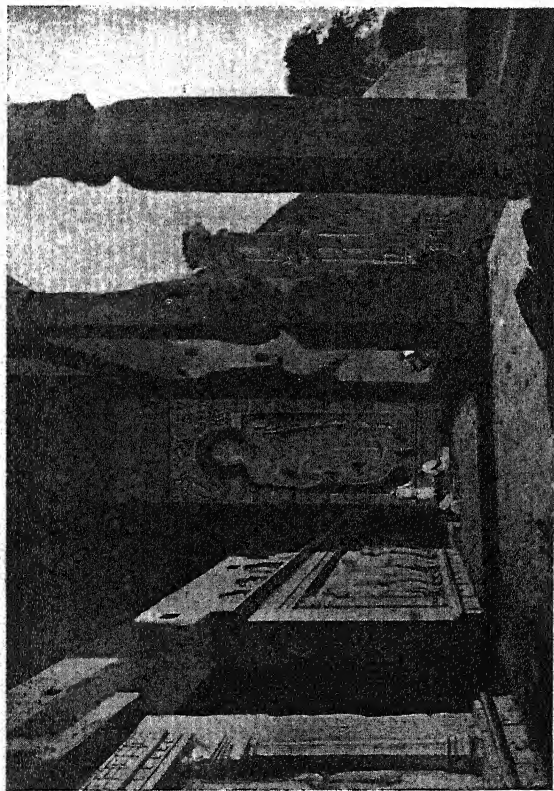
Speaking about the sculptures in the vestibule of the great chaitya cave, he remarks that they are in "a very crude style of Buddhist art, indeed I do not know of a cave with anything so wretched". The pillars that surround the nave of the great chaitya cave are, he adds, "of the same order as those at Karli, but executed in the most slovenly manner,—the elegance of proportion is entirely lost. The figures on the capital are much worse executed; the elephants here are in some instances employed in pouring water from jars they hold in their trunks, on dagophas or on the bogha, or sacred bo tree; and the boys with the snake hoods are also introduced. Only six of the columns,

however, on one side, and eleven on the other, are so ornamented, and the rest were never intended to be so, as they are finished as plain octagons; which is another instance of the carelessness exhibited in this cave". Fergusson assigns the cave, on account of its decadent sculpture, the ninth or the tenth century of Christ. It is, also, he observes, "not a little singular that the execution of every detail should be so clumsy and bad; for though we find in the descending series of Buddhist structures a tendency to polytheism, and the frippiness of ornament, I do not know any instance in which the figures and details are so bad as here, and this, too, at a time when Hindu art had scarcely passed its culminating point of perfection". The sculptures on the capitals of the chaitya cave, compared with the sculptures on the capitals of the chaitya hall at Karla of which this is conjectured to be a feeble copy, and the screen in front of the cave helps the location of its date. Burgess remarks that the screen "though very much weatherworn and consequently difficult to draw, is of very nearly the same design that is in the Gautamiputra cave at Nasik, and in its complication of discs and animal forms seems almost as modern as what we find at Amravati which, there seems little reason for doubting, belongs to the fourth or fifth century after Christ".

The stupa in the centre of the hall is simple and unadorned with sculptures. It is about 16 feet in diameter. Its capital has disappeared along with the

No. 54.

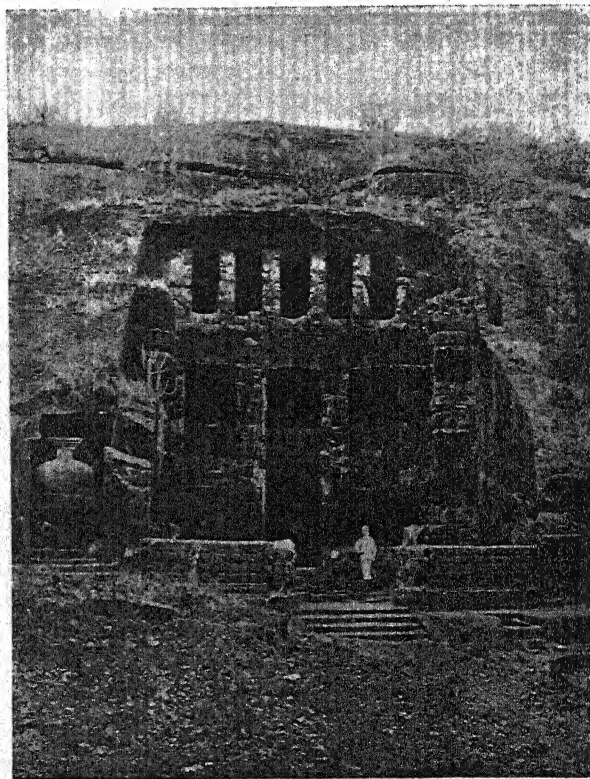
At Kanheri



THE SCULPTURED PANELS ON THE VERANDAH.

No. 55.

At Kanheri



COURT AND VERANDAH

woodwork of the arched roof. The great arched window and the gallery underneath it form the entrance to the hall. The verandah, near the gallery, at present uncovered, was, probably, originally, marked by a wooden balustrade. On the extreme corners of the verandah are seen two colossal images of Buddha, nearly 23 feet high. They seem to belong to a period much later than the period of the excavation of the cave.

Karla and Kanheri

For the sculptures in this cave, although condemned unreservedly by him in the text of the folio volume of the plates of the "Rock-cut Temples of India", published in 1845 and also in his "History of Indian and Eastern Architecture," published in 1876, Fergusson has allowed a less entirely emphatic condemnation to creep in the description of the cave in his book on "The Cave Temples of India," published in 1880. The sculpture on the front screen wall is, we are told, "apparently a copy of that in the same position at Karle, but rather better executed, indeed, they are the best carved figures in these caves; the rock in this place happens to be peculiarly close grained, and the style of the dress of the figures is that of the age of the great Satakarnis.

Ornaments and Costume

The ear-rings are heavy and some of them oblong, while the anklets of the women are very heavy, and

the turbans wrought with great care. This style of dress never occurs in any of the later caves or frescoes. They may, I think, with confidence be regarded as of the age of the cave. Not so with the images above them, among which are several of Buddha and two standing figures of the Bodhisattwa Avlokiteswara which all may belong to a later period. So also does the figure of Buddha in the front wall at the left end of the verandah, under which is an inscription containing the name of Buddhaghosa, in letters of about the sixth century." In the verandah court on the left are two rooms, of perhaps a later date than the cave, the first outer room contains the usual sculptures.

The Court Columns

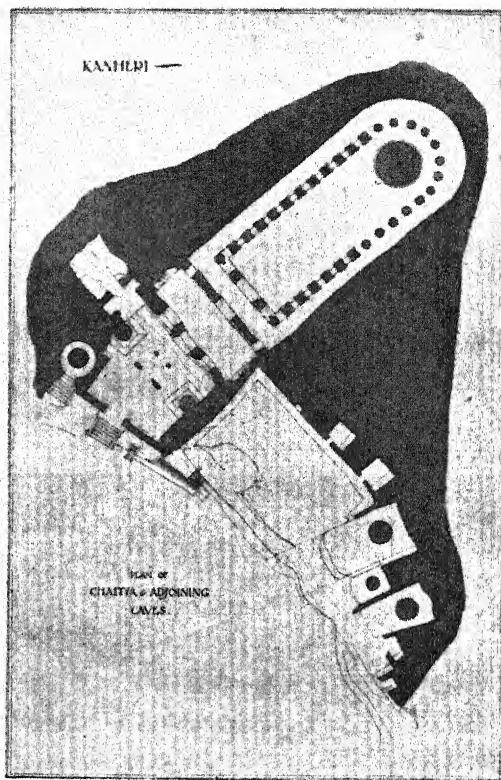
The approach to the court is marked by two pillars, east and west. On top of the pillar, on the west, are four lions, similar to those at Karla. On the top of the other pillar opposite are three crouching squat figures resembling the figures on the pillar decorating the court of the "Indra Sabha" cave at Ellora. The figures, it is believed, supported a wheel. To the left of the court is a circular cell containing a massive *stupa*. This cell along with the elongated vihar on the right of the court, containing three stupas, are, evidently, of a much earlier date than the cave. Around the stupas in the vihar are sculptures of Buddhist figures and litany. To the south of this vihar, is an unfinished chaitya cave with

No. 56.

At Kanheri



PADMAPANI FIGURES



The Great Chaitya Cave (Plan) is considered as an Architectural "Copy".

square-based columns on the verandah decorated with "cushion-shaped" capitals of the pattern at Elephanta. It is believed to be the latest important excavation of the hill belonging to the ninth or tenth century after Christ.

The inner walls of cave No. 14 contain four tall images of Buddha on the walls. Cave No. 21 is a vihara thus described by Burgess:—"a vihara with a large advanced porch supported by pillars of the Elephanta type in front and by square ones behind of the pattern occurring in Cave XV at Ajunta. The hall door is surrounded by mouldings, and on the back are the remains of painting, consisting of Buddhas. In the shrine is an image, and small ones are cut in the side walls, in which are also two cells.

Uncommon Sculpture

In a large recess to the right of the porch is a seated figure of Buddha, and on his left is Padmapani Sahasrabahu-lokeshwar, with ten additional heads piled up over his own; and on the other side of the chamber is the litany with four compartments on each side." These composite sculptures are uncommon and are an instructive incident in the historic evolution of Indian Sculpture. On the south of the ravine near No. 21 is a group of nineteen caves. The largest of the caves is a vihar cave with side cells. The walls of its verandah and the sides and back of its hall are carved with images of

Buddha in different attitudes and variously accompanied, with so many female figures introduced as to show that it was the work of the Mahayana school. There is reason, however, to suppose that the sculpture is later than the excavation of the cave. Caves No. 64, 66, and 67 behind these have been noticeable "for the profusion of their sculptures, consisting chiefly of Buddhas and their attendants, dagobas, etc. But in one (66) is a fine sculptured litany in which the central figure of Avlokiteswara has a tall female on each side, and beyond each are fine compartments, those on the right representing danger from the elephant, lion, snake, fire and shipwreck; those on the left from imprisonment (?) Garuda, Sitala or disease, sword and some enemy not now recognisable from the abrasio of the stone.

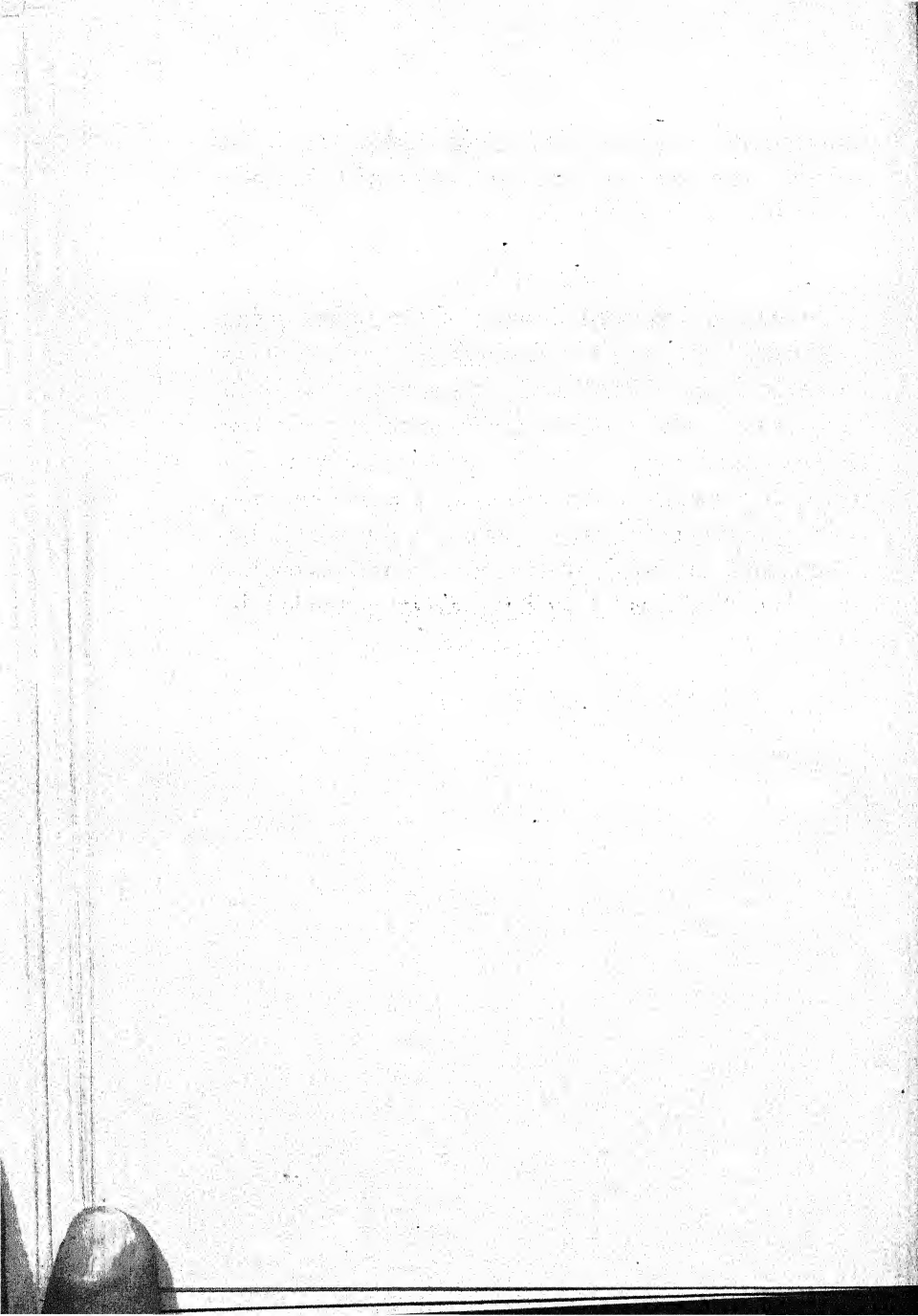
Buddhist Litany

In another is a similar litany representing Buddha seated on the Padmasana, or lotus throne, supported by two figures with snake hoods, and surrounded by attendants in the manner so usual in the Mahayana sculptures of a later age in these caves. There are more figures in this one than are generally found on these compositions, but they are all very like one another in their general characteristics. Over the cistern and on the pilasters of the verandah are

inscriptions which at first sight appear to be in tabular form and in characters met with nowhere else; they are in Pehlavi."

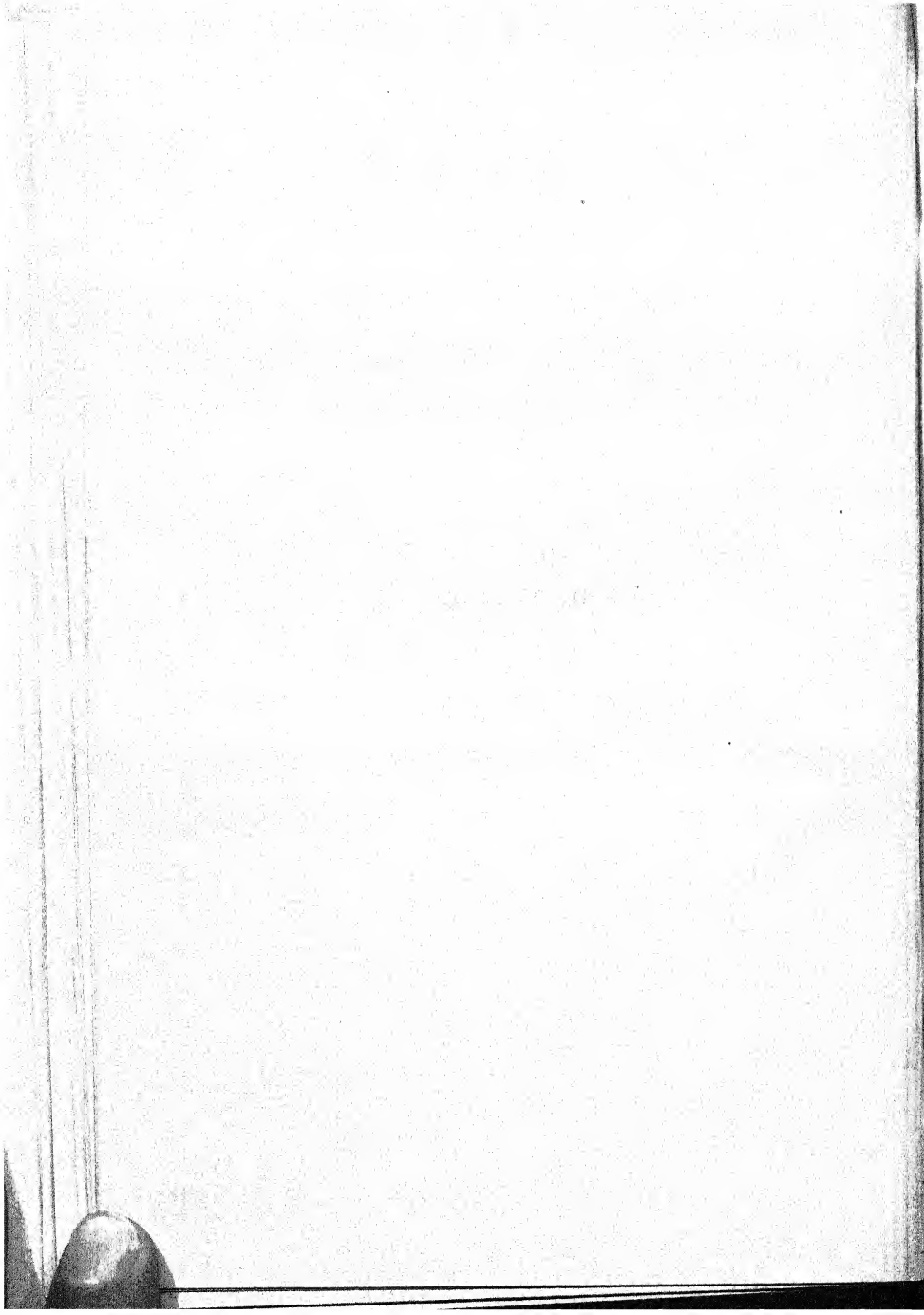
Buddhist Pose

Fergusson has noticed some of the salient points of the Buddha images in Kanheri. He says:—"Most of the principal Buddhas in this series sit with the feet down, only the smallest ones with their legs crossed; and very often the principal figure of a group, apparently a Bodhisattwa, is a standing one, with a high head-dress. I have not remarked elsewhere, and attended by two women with chowries; the true Buddhas, I believe, always attended by men."



(ii)

ARCHITECTURE



The vastly scattered, "straggling," caves at Kanheri make it extremely difficult to define its architectural achievements or importance. The "chaityas" begin with small cells, incomplete halls and end with the great "chaitya" cave. The "vihars" begin with the plainest cell or with the usual benched porch and verandah and end with the big "Durbar" cave. Almost every cave is, as Fergusson has observed, "furnished with a cistern or well, which even at the time of my visit in April was nearly full, though no rain could have fallen for months. Nothing of the kind exists at Ajanta, but the stream with its koonds supplied the deficiency there; at Karli, Ellora, Elephanta, Khandagiri and even at Gwalior, these cisterns are to be found cut in the rock, in the vicinity of all the temples and vihars." The great "chaitya" temple and the "Durbar" hall are representative of the best in the series of the scattered caves at Kanheri.

An Architectural Copy

The great "chaitya" temple is in plan, structure and execution of architectural details and sculptural motifs a literal and bad copy of the famous chaitya hall at Karla caves. The dimensions of the caves are, however, according to Fergusson, "somewhat less than those of Karli, the total length being eighty-eight feet six inches, total breadth thirty-nine feet ten

inches, the length and breadth of the nave being seventy-four feet two inches and thirty-nine feet ten inches respectively. The daghoba, forty-nine feet in circumference."

New Light

The "Durbar" cave has been recognised by Fergusson as one that seemed to him to throw "new light on the arrangements in many Buddhist Caves, whose appropriation has been hitherto difficult to understand." He does not regard it "a vihara in the ordinary sense of the term, though it has some cells, but a Dharamsala or place of assembly, and is the only cave now known to exist that enables us to realise the arrangements of the great hall erected by Ajat Satru in front of the Sattapanni Cave at Rajagriha, to accommodate the first convocation held immediately after the death of Buddha. According to the Mahavanso, 'Having in all respects perfected this hall, he had invaluable carpets spread there corresponding to the number of priests (500), in order that being seated on the north side the south might be faced; the inestimable pre-eminent throne of the high-priest was placed there. In the centre of the hall, facing the east, the exalted preaching pulpit, fit for the deity himself, was erected.' The projecting plan of the shrine occupies, he says, "precisely the position of the President in the above description. In the cave it is occupied by a figure of Buddha on

a sinhasana, with Padampani and another attendant or chauri-bearer. This, however, is exactly what might be expected more than 1,000 years after the first convocation was held, and when the worship of images of Buddha had taken the place of the purer forms that originally prevailed. It is easy to understand that in the sixth century when this cave was probably excavated, the 'present deity' would be considered the sanctifying President of any assembly, and his human representative would take his seat in front of the image. In the lower part of the hall, where there are no cells, is a plain space, admirably suited for the pulpit of the priest who read Bana to the assembly. The centre of the hall, 73 feet by 32, would according to modern calculations—5 square feet to each individual—accommodate from 450 to 500 persons, but evidently was intended for a much smaller congregation. Only two stone benches are provided, and they would hardly hold 100, but be this as it may, it seems quite evident that this cave is not a vihara in the ordinary sense of the term, but a Dharamsala or place of assembly like the Nagarjuni Cave, Barabar, Bhima's Rath at Mahavallipur and probably Cave XX at Ajanta. The Maharwadi Cave at Ellora—is another of this class, and others may be found when they are looked for." The cave is plain and unadorned. The pillars of the verandah octagons plain, without base or capitals. The pillars in the interior are square at the lower and upper ends "with

incised circular mouldings, changing in the centre into a belt with 16 sides or flutes and with plain bracket capitals. Their style is that of the Visvakarma temple at Elura, and even more distinctly that of the Chaori in the Mukundwara pass."

Festival Canopies

The holes in the floor of the court in front of many of the caves and the mortices cut in the rocks as footings for posts, and holdings for wooden rafters to support a covering to shelter the front of the caves are by Burgess believed to be for the protection of the caves during the monsoon. In all likelihood, they also served, if not solely, as decorated canopies that have been the distinguishing feature of almost every ancient and traditional, popular and socio-religious, festivals in India. They were, consequently, utilised to mark the festive occasions in the temple.

Some Conclusions

Many points in the evolution of Indian architecture and sculpture could neither be explained nor understood without the necessary reference to the socio-religious customs, traditions, conventions, needs and aspirations as well as to the contemporary artistic skill. Indian architecture and sculpture were not, as the academic "revivalists" would have us believe, merely the literal transcript from craftsmen's codes or manuals or from the canons of temple rituals.

The current conventions, means or rather methods of representations were, no doubt, accepted and respected as they have been accepted and respected by artists of almost every age and all countries. That the conventions of representation as well as the traditions of artistic technique were distinct from those elsewhere outside India were, thus, for this particular reason, immaterial. They were there. They were current. And, the art-craftsmen, painters, sculptors and architects accepted and respected them. Like artists of every age and all countries they strived and aspired, however, to reveal in their work collective emotions, folk-concepts and social ideals. Individual gifts, the existing traditional standards and artistic skill enabled them to proceed towards the heights. But it was the human touch, the human urge, the human instrument, responsive to the social aspirations of the times, the human figure which "centuries preceding and following the birth of Christ" Indian sculptors had, as Ludwig Bachoffer observes, "taken such endless pains over the problems of how to reproduce," that gave the distinctive uplift to the heights. There were, as M. Codrington says, both "passionate form" and "epic contents." And, whatever the "policeman of history," the apt phrase by which Mr. Barman describes the mental outlook of the antiquarians who would confine art within "official enclosures" or the advocate of priestly creeds and dogmas might say or endeavour to dictate, the

artistic heritage of India, as it actually survives, defies with unquestionable triumph their cast-iron compartments, dogmatic creeds and conventional or rather standardised uniformity.

If that is so, as I am convinced it is, we must supplement our information from priestly rituals, craftsmen's codes and manuals from epigraphy and iconography, with the insight and, above all, with the vision which animate the ancient imagination in the poetry, drama and folklore of the country. The poems and the folklore thus transmuted, employed by me to illustrate the sculpture and architecture of the rock-cut temples, are, consequently, a positive aid for those who want to, as they should, see, as approximately as they can, the artistic heritage as the Indian artists have seen and as the Indian people have responded to.

From that angle of vision, sight and insight, new yet old, form the unconventional and un-"policed" vantage, the rock-cut temples around Bombay yield or rather unfold indelible graphic impressions of the vast magnitude of their unexplored artistic territory.

Western India has been the common meeting-ground, the ground of conflict as well as of experiment and, consequently, of distinct evolution architectural and sculptural forms and values. The architectural and sculptural forms, designs, details, motifs, stand in conflict, are subjected to experiments meet and merge for the ultimate evolution and emergence

as distinct and significant artistic achievements. The coast-line including the area beginning with the rock-cut temples at Elephanta near Bombay and terminating somewhere around the Kanheri temples in the Salsette if looked at and examined with unsophisticated and dispassionate artistic insight would indicate, for instance, the architectural pre-occupation which plans the main temple at Elephanta distinct from the outlying temples, which changes the scheme of decoration at Jogeshwari and substitutes doors for the colonnades for focussing attention; which almost abolishes sculpture from the main hall of the Mandapeshwar temple, offers the great chaitya cave at Kanheri as proof of the artistic failure of a "copied" temple and the "Durbar" hall which should throw "new light" on Buddhist building arrangements but which still confuses the antiquarians who cannot classify it either as chaitya or a vihara but as a "Dharamshala".

If these monuments were looked at and examined from the point of view of art, many of the architectural and sculptural details and motifs would lose, quite appreciably, the fancy "mystic" garb they have assumed at present for antiquarian gambles. And, we would be free to devote attention to the search and rescue of the plastic qualities of sculptures, say, at Elephanta and Jogeshwari distinct in technique, execution, artistic achievement and significance from the sculptures in the South affected by their casting process.

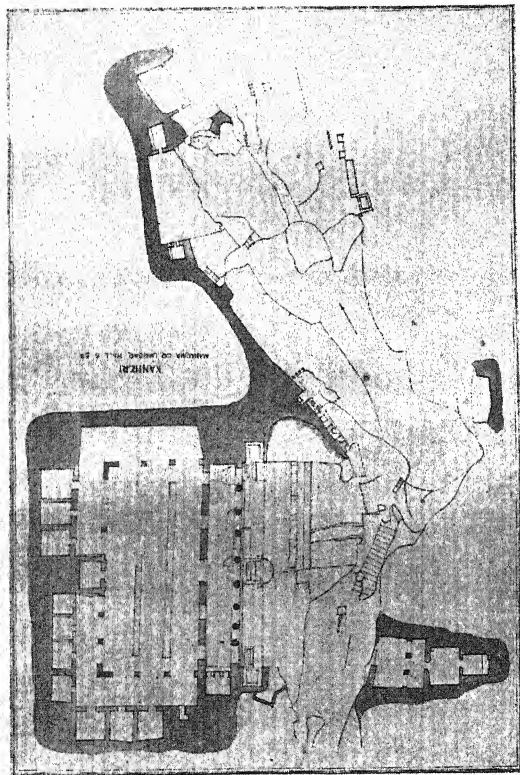
If we cultivate the patience and acquire the artistic insight to decipher the scheme of sculptures which assigns almost the identical position to the Mahayogi and Tandava themes at Dumar Lena, at Elephanta Jogeshwari and Mandapeshwar, or of the tiered compartments carved at the corner of the panel in the inner room of the temple at Mandapeshwar, or of the sculptural composition of the memorial stones found at Borivli we would be able to follow the meeting and fusion of Buddhist and Brahmanical pre-occupation as well as patterns in art. We shall, moreover, follow and define the distinction between contemporary and local art. Similarly, the prominence in sculptural compositions, to the elephant, say, at Elephanta and Mandapeshwar, the emergence of the horse in the sculptures at Elephanta, Jogeshwari and particularly in the spirited rendering at Mandapeshwar and the gradual subordination and disappearance of the lion or the leogriff and "yal" so characteristic of the decorative sculptures of the South would lead into another unexplored region of art. Or, again, the architectural logic of the "kirtimukha" motif in sculpture, or the "Pallava 'Kudu' with the head of Gandharva," or, say, the cone-shaped "mukuta" and mace observable in the sculpture, at Jogeshwari, or the figure of Padmapani with ten heads, one over another tapering in a pyramid form, found at Kanheri would take us for an art itinerary that would begin at Nepal in the North and would

terminate much farther than the rock-cut sculptures of Mahvallipur in the South.

All these, obviously fascinating, avenues could not be explored here. All I could do, within the strictly restricted aim and scope of this volume is to endeavour to claim for those who wish to understand the priceless and enduring artistic heritage treasured in the rock-cut temples a little freedom to see it unbridled and unfettered by the attention "the policeman of history" has been inflicting during decades of "revived" interest, to see it as the ancient artists saw it, from the point of view of art for the guidance and inspiration of art in the present for universal values of art that will endure in the future. If the rock-cut temples around Bombay helps the visitor, student, exponent or artist, Indian or non-Indian, to *see* more than he believed or saw before of art instinct with imperishable beauty, they will have not only asserted their historic place in human civilisation but justified their title to permanently fruitful service to humanity as well.

For the heritage of beauty is the heritage of humanity. It is common to the universe. It is permanent as well. India's vast, immensely, almost illimitably, rich art legacy will be well employed if in the modern search for permanent and universal values and significance of art it could assist to recover and re-establish the lost human belief in the common and permanent heritage of beauty.





The "Durbar" Hall—Dharamsalla.
The plan has been a problem for antiquarians.

No. 59.

At Parel



The "Vidyeshwars" recently discovered at Parel, Bombay.

APPENDIX

THE PAREL SCULPTURES

While the proofs of the present book were being finally revised by me, I learnt about the images in stone discovered at the village in Parel, near Golanji Hill, Bombay, sometime in the second week of October. Naturally, I inspected the images with keen interest. For, it promises to be not only a rare archaeological find it is suggestive of the many unexplained ideas and facts in the hitherto inadequately surveyed and still more inadequately studied regions of the art of Indian sculpture. Two factors obstruct the path to any absolutely definite conclusions. One of them may be mentioned or rather seen in the zeal with which the images have been covered with rice, garlands and "kumkum" by devoted crowds. Secondly, some of the images appear to be in an incomplete stage of execution. But more than enough of the images and of their general outlines of composition could be seen to justify the formulation of some certain inferences that could enable students and exponents of Indian sculpture to proceed further with the task of elucidation. I shall, therefore, describe them, as I saw them, beginning first with the general lines of the composition of the figures. The figures have been carved out of a slab of stone nearly fourteen feet high and six feet wide. They have been arranged, the comparison is expressive, like a spreading palm tree. The vertical trunk line is composed of three figures placed, it would seem, in three different receding planes; the horizontal lines of the branches constitutes six figures, three on each side. The first dominant trunk figure standing on the base and the figure which branch out of it recalled the identity of the composition of the "Ekpada Trimurti" at Jambukeshwara, Sri Rangan and of a similar composition at Tirruvorriyur, a theme which is commonly seen on the temple pillars in the South.

The "Vidyeshwaras"

But the branching figures do not, in their present state, indicate clear marks of either Brahma or Vishnu essential for their identification with the "Ekpada Trimurti." Another factor which discounts the first impression is that the present vertical figure is not standing with only one leg on the "Padmapitha", a condition believed to be necessary for "Ekpada" images. If the composition is not "Ekpada," if it is not "Trimurti," what is it? It is the genus of which "Ekpada Trimurti" is, apparently, a species. It is an interpretation in stone of the "Vidyeshwaras" whose encrusted ignorance is shattered by Siva during his "Sanhar" or destructive mood and are given new bodies, action, new regions and scope as well as new faculties of perception and appreciation for enabling them to help those lower than themselves to pass toward the higher stages of evolution. If we examine now the sculptured images we find that the topmost vertical figure has ten arms carrying the weapons of war associated with Siva, obviously indicative of Siva in his mood of destruction. If we look down from this point of view, we find the eight "Vidyeshwaras" evolved by the action, six horizontally, and vertically, two straight underneath Siva. Another feature which confirms this inference is the fact that four of the figures emerging from the sides of the vertical figures are higher than their waist and with raised legs thus distinguishing a feature in sculptural representant of the emerging "Vidyeshwaras". It may be remembered that the "Vidyeshwaras" who attend the marriage of Siva and Parvati are also eight in number.

Unlike Elephanta

They are, obviously, unlike the "Trimurti" at Elephanta. For, the uniformity of objects and of the "mudras," except perhaps the slight variation in one of the figures, of the unostentatious ornament and the uniformity, more or less, of the expres-

sion as well as the difference in character of the composition of the Parel sculptures connote a sculptural theme distinct from the threefold aspect of Mahesh carved and known as "Trimurti" at Elephanta. The artist who designed the Parel sculptures designed a uniform expression for them which is certainly radically different from the threefold and varied expression of the Mahesh at Elephanta. The difference was, obviously, due to the difference in the conception of the images at Parel and at Elephanta, not to the apparent difference in artistic skill or method.

Approximate Period

The Parel sculptures reveal, it seems, their affinity with the Elephanta sculptures by similar traits of modelling technique. They would thus be entitled to be assigned the same date. But their greater resemblance both in sculptural traits, drapery and in their tentative composite grouping with the sculptures at Badami of "Virat-Purusha," (Cave IV) and of "Padmapani Sahasrabhulokeshwara" with "ten heads piled over his own" at the Kanheri temples (Cave XXI) and with similar Buddhist trends, for example, observable in the images of Bali at Badami (Cave Nos. II and-IV) make it more than probable that they were, in all likelihood, carved at a date during the period between the 6th and the 7th century, immediately preceding the period of the Elephanta sculptures. The sculptured panel at Parel depicts also the subsidiary figures of the musicians at the usual place near the base. The musicians with the flute and with the musical instruments which resemble mandoline and harp could be easily traced.

Indian sculpture has been, as I said, inadequately surveyed. The art has scarcely begun to be studied. Consequently, it would be sometime before the composite images of Virat and Padmapani at Badami and Kanheri of Bali at Badami and the Vidyeshwaras at Parel would be appropriately examined. But the transitory period

when these images expressed the interchange of art and cultural conceptions between contemporary creeds of the Jains, the Buddhists, the Vaishnavites and the Sivaites is a phase of evolution important alike to the student of Indian history, of art and of culture. The sculptures discovered at Parel is an apt and forceful reminder of the work that remains to be done, of the vast areas in Indian sculpture left, hitherto, unexplored. The resemblance of the Parel sculptures with the verandah image at Jogeshwari and with some of the images in the Prince of Wales' Museum Bombay now assigned to the category of the "Elephanta" sculptures make both their date and their place of origin subject to legitimate doubts. The importance to students of the art of Indian sculpture of the Parel sculptures cannot therefore be overestimated. They have and they are likely to furnish the students and exponents of the art of Indian sculptures avenues of study hitherto closed to them.

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